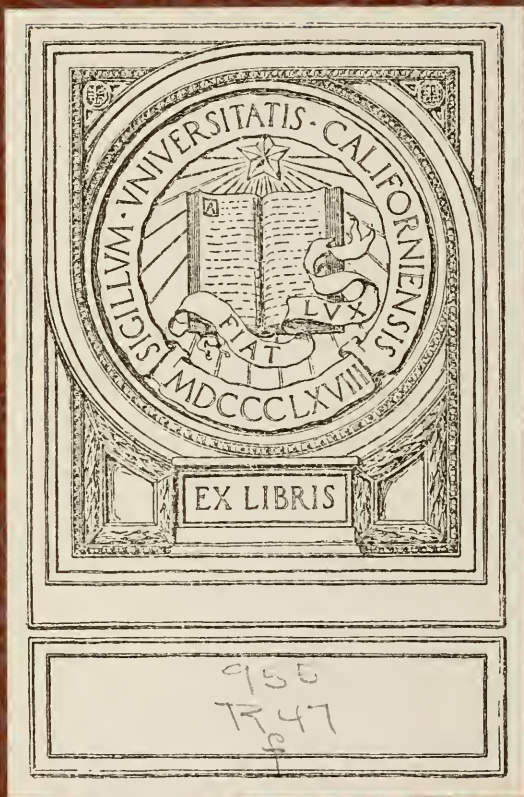


THE  
FIDDLER  
OF  
CARNE





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# The Fiddler of Carne

A North Sea Winter's Tale

BY ERNEST RHYS

AUTHOR OF

"A LONDON ROSE: AND OTHER RHYMES"

*"Ef yn llafar: ef yn fud!"*

EDINBURGH  
PATRICK GEDDES & COLLEAGUES  
MDCCCXCVI





## DEDICATION

Dear Diana

*Who has not heard of the Fiddler of Carne, that romantic figure in a homely community, who came by the sea and went by the sea, and whose origin and final destiny were alike unknown? In these pages it is attempted, for the first time I believe, to describe at length his adventures in the primitive seaport town as it was in his day, near a hundred years ago; now so grown out of all knowledge, so much transformed in fortune and estate, even in name, as to be barely recognisable. The Fiddler, and Marged Ffoulkes, and Andrer Fostor, and the rest of that circle of predestinate mortals, played their part long since in the North Sea's winter's tale; but for the tale-teller what has lived once, lives for ever. And it is as a tale-teller I would like to be judged, if at all.*

*But as every tale worth the telling has its second intention, the Fiddler's, if you will, is a plain fable of the artist, devoted, self-absorbed, a little more or less than purely human it may be, in an unconscious and quite matter-of-fact and*

## DEDICATION

*half-civilised community. He may teach it strange lore: the maiden in its midst to look to new horizons, the lover to follow his fate, hot youth to follow his ambition, or cold age to judge more coldly amiss; but his lot is not theirs, and the chances are that he mingles with them, and that he fiddles to them, at his and their common peril, though the peril be as much a part of life, and as necessary to their growth, man and woman, as is the cutting its teeth to a babe!*

*But why, you will say, why moralise the tale? Why indeed! If you like it, that is enough for me, your companion in so many a tale-telling over the winter's hearth. And if you like it, it will live! So believe me,—Your devoted*

E. R.

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# THE FIDDLER OF CARNE.

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## CHAPTER THE FIRST.

### THE FIRST AND LAST INN.

“Y Ty yn y Penryn—  
Traseifiad tregad lle trig !”

FROM the market-place of Carne, the long main street of the town, the Seagate, runs without a break seaward a full mile, until it merges itself in the pier. At this day the pier in turn continues it another half-mile out to sea, making a direct highway between land and water. But not a hundred years ago, ere the harbour had become as important as it is now, the pier was a primitive one of wood, partly supported on piles, shored up by decaying timbers, and not a third of its present length. Even in those days it served the town as a promenade, along which the townfolk were much given to parade

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in fine weather. In time of storm, sea and wind had it very much to themselves. Along this thoroughfare the east wind in particular found, as it were, a straight path into the town, so that its salt breath dimmed the shop-windows and mixed with the comfortable odours of spice and fruit at the shop-doors in the Seagate.

This afternoon, though it was only the first week of October, the wind was north-east and the North Sea in a wintry mood. The pier was deserted, drenched as it was every other moment by overleaping waves ; the Seagate itself showed small sign of life, until one reached its landward end in the market-place, where a few sea-dogs and tide-waiters might have been found lurking round the market-house and at ale-house doors. Of these ale-houses—and there were at least a dozen in the circuit of the square—one with the sign of the **FIRST AND LAST INN** showed much more life than the rest. A continual hum and clamour of voices from within, a bustle of feet in its passage, and a waft of warm air, smelling of ale-pots and tobacco-pipes, all showed it a favourite house of call.

## THE FIDDLER OF CARNE 3

An old red-brick house, much darkened and weather-stained, with three rows of narrow windows beneath its red-tile roof, it stood facing the opening of the Seagate, a storey higher than its neighbours in the square. Over its main entrance, which was low and broad, in conspicuous contrast to its windows, was the signboard, whose original reds and umbers were so faded that the painting might fairly serve now as an impressionistic rendering of whatever the beholder pleased. The only distinct thing about it, in fact, was the legend it bore :

### THE FIRST AND LAST INN

By DAVID FFOULKES.

The reason for this sign might not appear at a glance, since it referred to a day when the house stood alone, and when it must be either the first or the last you came upon, as you entered or departed from the town. But time had gone by ; other houses had grown up ; a weekly market had been set going in their midst ; and now the market-place was a quadrangle, so shut in and sheltered that on market days you might easily have imagined yourself

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in the middle of some little country town far from the sea. In reality the FIRST AND LAST INN stood on the very brink of the river, which made a bold sweep here, behind the town, ere it straightened itself for a last mile or so before entering the sea. At high tide its waters washed under a crazy wooden balcony behind the Inn, and devoured more than half the flight of well-worn stone steps that served the old ferry boat from Carne Quay opposite with a landing. Thus, whether (like the ghostly Captain Couleur who used, it is said, to haunt the place) you climbed out of the sea by the piles at the pier, and entered the town by the Seagate, or whether you entered it from the river by the ferry, you still must come upon the Inn first or last in the adventure of the town.

Within, a company of well-salted heroes was enjoying itself this afternoon, under the eye of David Ffoulkes, the master of the house. A short, broad, red-faced, grizzled Welshman; his left eyebrow diminished one-half by a great scar; with a gruff voice and a lurking smile; there you have Captain Fox, as he was called locally, who had left the sea



six years ago to turn innkeeper here. What was remarkable in him, was the alert expression of his black eyes and heavy features, made heavier by his six years at the FIRST AND LAST. It was as if one looked into a beer-barrel, and found an elfin in it.

But the Captain, burly as he was, was as nothing in comparison to one of his customers, who fairly dominated the long sanded room and the rest of its occupants by his physical importance. He was speaking now, and his voice expressed him; every word weighted with some seventeen stone weight.

“Well, Captain, es I was tellin’ ye, Mistor Reynolds just leapt cannily from the staithes, and into the keel, and creeps away under the coals, an’ beggor! if they ever caught the beastie!”

This was the tag end of a story, which Mistor Foster (as he was familiarly known in the neighbourhood) was fond of recounting,—the story of the only fox-hunt he had ever witnessed, which ended in the fox’s taking to a boat at Carne Quay, and escaping so. If there was something perfunctory in the exclamations that the story called forth, it was simply that the hearers had

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already heard it so often. All but one sailor, a Dane, who sat in a dark corner, and who, not properly comprehending, began suddenly to laugh, in a hoarse falsetto, at what he supposed to be the humour of the narrator. Mistor Fostor did not approve of that laugh, and glared heavily at the Dane, a mild, sun-tanned creature, with gold rings in his ears. But the fumes of something like a tenth glass of the strong brandy, known to the *habitués* of the Inn as "Dieppe," were too powerful to let Mistor Fostor retain any fixed idea long. His head gave the inimitable consequential jerk of the man who in his cups remembers his self-importance, and a moment's silence ensued, when, along with the distant sea-noises from the harbour-mouth, came an incongruous sound from the upper regions of the house—the thin tinkling of a piano! It was only the doubtfully strummed air of Haydn's "Heavens are Telling"; but it pleased Mistor Fostor, who forthwith began to beat time with one hand to the music. When the air itself was concluded, the player began some simple variations, which were too intricate to be easily followed. Hereupon he said:

"That lassie of yours, Cap'n, can make her

fin'rs sing varry sweet, but I care little for them new-fangled tunes she is on wi' now. Give me an auld tune like the 'Keel Row'!"

The Captain, who, like most of his countrymen, knew something about music, and had been a good singer in his younger days, smiled indulgently in reply, and whistled softly a few bars of "Mentra Gwen!" Meanwhile the piano had stopped, and a shuffling step was heard at the door of the room. It was a message, so to say, from the sea; borne by a pale, unkempt, weedy youth in soiled and tarry clothes, with a shock of red hair starting out from under an old sou'-wester. He touched its brim deprecatingly as he said:

"There's a bit barque trying to mak' the harbour, Mistor Fostor, and Andrer waänts to knaa if ye will be for going to her."

Mistor Fostor pondered the news with a very convincing air of professional gravity, for though he had not gone such sea errands much latterly, this form of consultation was always solemnly gone through. After a moment or two, pursing his lips, and giving a powerful ahem, he got on to his feet: as he rose his head touched the rafters, his bulk was amazing.

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“There’s naeboddy ony use but me, it seems! naeboddy ony use but auld Fostor!” he muttered, making his way across the sanded floor to the door, and waving his hand to the company as a sign of parting.

The Captain called after him: “Where are you off to, Foster?” winking at the remaining mariners as he spoke. When the pilot was out of hearing, he added: “I’ll wager a sixpenny bit he don’t go to her.”

The master pilot, in fact, was not to disappear for long. In going along the passage, he shouldered the wall in a way to make the house shake, and to make any one tremble for the fate of any craft entrusted to his care. He thought better of it himself; for at the street door he hesitated, and leant and steadied himself for a moment against the door-post, muttering again, “Naeboddy ony use but auld Fostor!” By this time Riley the Red was disappearing down the covered alley at the right-hand corner of the inn.

“Hi! Riley, lad,” shouted the pilot after him; “tell Andrer to look after the bit barque.”

So saying, he turned about and betook himself back into the comfortable shelter of the Inn

passage. As he retraced his steps along it he caught sight of a figure on the staircase at its end rapidly ascending. It was only a flying glimpse, but in that moment the figure, that of a girl of eighteen or so, had turned back a laughing face, with an expression not to be mistaken.

As he took in its significance, Mistor Foster fell to muttering in a sort of good-natured fury: "Ha, ye little monkey! ye witch! ye mischief!"

The only response was a ripple of girlish laughter from the landing above. Was it some echo of it, in a gruff male chorus, that the master pilot heard, as solemnly and portentously grumbling to himself, he rejoined the roysterers in the back room?

Whatever it was, a sudden silence fell upon the room for a moment as the great man resumed his seat. Only one brisk, clean-shaven young man, who might be a ship's mate, tossed a small silver coin dexterously across to Captain Ffoulkes.

"Becrikey, the wager's yours, Cap'n!" he said, in a loud "aside."

The Captain in reply, as he dropt the coin

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into the till, and then proceeded to fill another glass for Mistor Fostor, merely hummed two lines of an old Cardigan song, which, being in Welsh, that worthy did not understand, but which signify—

“ It is the salt, and not the sea,  
The salmon said, that gravels me !”

## CHAPTER THE SECOND.

MARGED FFOULKES.

“Like the pale waters in their wintry race,  
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,  
Lives on this lonely face.”

W. B. YEATS.

WHILE Mistor Foster was resuming his seat, the piano began again, and might be heard tinkling upstairs. Its thin treble notes formed a plaintive tune, whose real accompaniment, a fanciful listener might have thought, was the deep bass of the sea-breakers growling without intermission at the harbour's mouth.

The sound came from a large low room at the back of the house, lit by three windows, reaching from the ceiling to the ground, and opening upon the crazy hanging balcony already mentioned, which commanded a fine stretch of river at full tide. Within, the faded and stained and here and there loosened wall-paper told its tale of the river damp. Once the walls had

been a crude blue and yellow : now they were faded to a most delicate and various grey and green, not unlike the sea itself under certain cold wintry skies. The remaining domestic scenery of the room had a like effect : time, damp, and long use in such service as a hostelry might require, had left their marks on everything. Not least was this to be seen in the battered splendours of the grand piano which, since pianos were comparatively rare then, was, it may perhaps be explained, one of a cargo of pianos wrecked off Carne ten years before, on its way from Kümme's (the great London makers of that day) to the port of Leith, for the Edinburgh ladies of taste. This instrument took up a large part of one end of the apartment. Evidently there had once been two rooms where now only one existed ; and the floor at one end, where the piano stood, was some six inches higher than the remainder. This, and a narrow door in the remotest corner of the room, covered with wall-paper as an ineffectual disguise, helped to give it the slight resemblance to a stage that one might discover, if one were as fanciful as the musician who sat there strumming out a doubtful music.



As for the performer, there was a freshness, a youthfulness, in her whole presence, which contrasted pleasantly with her surroundings. A rusty high-waisted black frock did little to disguise the soft, half-childish lines of her figure, as she bent forward over the keys. In fact, though she was nearly nineteen, she looked much younger. Certain curves in her cheeks, and a serious childish pout of the lips over a difficult passage in the music book before her, suggested that she was still far from being a woman. But presently, when the wind, on some sudden access of force, shook the windows, and the door in the corner softly opened as if of its own volition, she started up from her seat as if some new idea had struck her; and her face was alert, her figure a woman's.

The opening door and the sound of the wind in the walls and around the house reminded her of other things than the tune of "Poor Mary Ann," the last tune she had been trying to extract from her music book. She went to the nearest window, and stood there, singing in a treble voice of singular sweetness a foolish ditty of the day, "Now rustic Robin sings of love, and giggling Jane approves the lay," as

she looked out at the river where the October day was fast fading, and altering the grey reflections in the water to a deep umber.

A little way below the Inn, a blunt tub of a boat was crossing the river to Carne Quay, rowed by Riley, who was carrying back Mistor Fostor's message to his son Andrer. Marged had heard enough of the little colloquy, as we know, to understand what Riley's errand meant. Soon the pilot's boat would set out from Carne Quay with him and Andrer Fostor, and run out to sea to find and take charge of the vessel beating about outside. She stretched her arms with a gesture of relief as she thought of it, for she had been indoors all day. How good to go out to sea like them! Opening the hasp of the window, she stepped out on to the crazy wooden balcony, whose planks here and there had crumbled into small holes. From this outlook she could see Carne Quay across the river, where Andrer lived; and Andrer was the only approach to a sweetheart she had yet had! She could see, too, as her eye roved, the long line of ship masts, a few hundred yards below, where the estuary widened, and could hear distinctly the ominous noise of the breakers down

at the pier. To the pier-head she would go, and watch the pilot boat as it crossed the bar, often an exciting passage when wind and tide were at odds, as they were now. She knew that Betsy was waiting to entrap her as soon as her music should be over, but this only served to enhance the pleasure of the escape: and she stole upstairs and downstairs, got hat and cloak, and was lightly gone by the side-door of the Inn before anyone had discovered her.

The great point was to reach the pier before the boat. She would have run in her eagerness, but the flight might arouse attention. While she was making her way along the Seagate, an old man in an immense pair of sea-boots, and a tarred top-hat, came out of a small antiquated shop with bulging windows and deep doorway, and called after her—

“Miss Fox! Miss Fox, honey!”

But she pretended not to hear; hurrying on, in spite of which, when she emerged at length from the shelter of the last house, and reached the approaches to the pier, it was only to see the boat tossing already far out amid the cross seas on the bar.

The cold late twilight was by this grown

dark enough to make it difficult to see the other side of the harbour clearly, and the wind seemed to be gathering energy with the approach of night. More than once as she passed along the pier, one wave more boisterous than the rest, though the tide was so far out, sent a contrary shower of spray over her head and shoulders. But this was a part of the adventure on which she rather counted, and which gave a last touch of risk and pleasant uncertainty to the whole experience. She held on her way all the more because of these sea's interruptions to the extreme end of the pier, which curved and broadened into a fairly spacious platform, with a tall lantern mast rigged up to carry the nightly beacon that served as a guide to entering or passing vessels. Here, at the foot of this mast, was a primitive shelter, constructed of a few planks with a tarpaulin roof, which made a capital lookout, and here she took up her post.

Far out, where the coble was tacking and beating about, she could barely see the ship to which it was bound, in difficulties probably with the coarse sea, and the tremendous current which runs at such times off the Carne coast. It

made no headway at all, and in the fading light threatened momentarily to disappear from her view, and to leave the pale coble the only visible human thing in the whole lonely scene. There was something chilling, austere, and half-melancholy in its effect upon her mind; and she turned with a sigh of relief as she heard a slow heavy step approaching on the pier.

It was the old harbour-master, Captain Tom, a simple functionary enough in those days. One of his few regular duties was to light the lantern and run it up the mast every evening at nightfall. He carried a huge lamp, with a red eye, in his hand now, and this gleam of warm ruddy colour served to curiously enhance the chill, the cheerlessness, and the sea-desolation of the surroundings.

“Whae’s that?” he said gruffly, turning his lamp for a second on the girl: “Miss Fox? Oh, haäd away hame. It’s no ways here for fond young lassies! It’s going to blow a bit the night!”

“Anything to hurt?” she asked, looking from his lamp out to sea, half absently.

He shook his head, and took no further notice

of her, but in a slow, serious pre-occupation with his office, detached the rope and tackle, fixed the lamp he had carried in a groove of the mast, and very deliberately hauled it aloft, where it cast its red gleam out on the water. This done, and it was a work of slow accomplishment at his un-hurrying hands, he went his way as he had come, and left Marged to keep her watch alone.

She did not stay there much longer, however. Soon she saw that the tide had turned, and simultaneously the darkness increased with a sudden profound gathering of gloom; and the lessening coble and the more distant ship had alike disappeared from her ken. Three pale sea-birds suddenly seemed to hover out of the sea or the air itself, and swooped and dipped with a plaintive pipe, a soft melancholy whistle, that expressed the whole loneliness and the spirit of the scene at this moment of nightfall, as nothing else could have done. Its solitariness struck her with a new sentiment about the coble tossing outside, and she wished she could be with Andrer, who was in it. Then, in turn, she thought of the Inn, and the fireside, and its familiar reminders; and, so

thinking, hastened her steps almost into a run as she turned homeward.

Before her, the lights were beginning to shine in the town. Carne was closing its doors against the night and the sea-wind. But when she had reached the Inn again, and doffed her straw hat, limp with the salt air and spray, she recalled the lonely sea, the boat, and the unknown ship with a certain envy, as she went down to the kitchen. There, indeed, Mistress Ffoulkes began to scold the moment she entered; but her thoughts were far away, and what she really heard was, not the "Howts, lassie!" of the good housewife, but these lines,—

“ Pull off, pull off thy silken gown,  
And give it unto me,  
Methinks it looks too rich and gay,  
To rot in the salt sea.”

## CHAPTER THE THIRD.

### A LATE GUEST.

“The night was black and drear  
Of the last day of the year,  
Two guests to the river inn  
Came from the wide world's bound ;  
One with clangour and din,  
The other without a sound.”

R. W. GILDER,

IT must have been some seven hours later, when Marged had been in bed and fast asleep for some time, that she awoke from a warm dreamless sleep to some unusual sound below. At first she resisted the natural effect of so belated a summons ; but the sound continued, and presently resolved itself into an irregular and dispirited knocking, as of some one who knocked with no very positive determination to be heard. At length, thoroughly aroused and remembering that her father and the maid-of-all-work were both heavy sleepers, she decided to go and investigate the cause of the summons for herself.



Her eyes were still so far filled with sleep, that when she had lit the candle it took on for a moment the semblance, she thought, of the red beacon at the pier's-head. Then another series of knocks ensued, and recalled her to herself. So, throwing round her a grey shawl, and hastily donning shoes and stockings, she stole lightly downstairs, at once half-afraid and half-delighted at the stillness of the house and her own lurking night fears.

When she had reached the passage, and looked along it to the door at its end, her courage failed her for a second ; but the knocking, that now again recommenced, was so gentle and tentative as to re-assure her.

“ Who's there ? ” she asked, with tremulously bold voice, as she prepared to draw the long bolt.

The answer came so soft and indistinct that she decided it must be a woman who stood without. At any rate, it so far satisfied her that she did not hesitate longer to open. She had set down the candle on the stairs, and as she opened the heavy door the inrushing wind made its flame waver so that its light at first only served to confuse the darkness, out of

which a pale face gazed in at her—a face so wistful, so apparently feminine in its lines, that it was not wonderful if she did indeed think it a woman's.

“Oh, come away in!” she said, holding out her hand with a sudden impulsive pity.

Even while she spoke, she saw her mistake, and that this was no woman's figure. No! it was a tall, somewhat stooping, slight young man, whose eyes were still full of a sea's affright, whose lips were still quivering, as he stepped into the passage, bowing to her with a courtesy that she was unaccustomed to, and found embarrassing.

She led the way to the kitchen, down the stairs at the passage end, instead of to any other room, recollecting the lingering fire there; for every night, according to local custom, the great kitchen hearth was banked up to last alight till next morning. Perhaps it was that something of sleep still lingered in her eyes; perhaps it was shyness, that made her stand long before the deep fireplace, stirring it without venturing to turn and steal a more sweeping glance at the stranger. At length, however, the broken crust of coal broke into a flame, and she collected her

mother-wit and good sense sufficiently to face him. She might well be forgiven if an inarticulate sigh of surprise broke from her lips as she did so. She had left the candle on the table, but now the stranger had placed it on a chair, while he opened a green baize bag, which she had not noticed before, whose open mouth was disgorging—a *fiddle*! His face as he bent over it was filled with a most tremulous concern; for, as a glance showed her, the salt water had drenched the green bag. The concern of its owner was so movingly expressed that it infected her in her turn, and she drew near to see the result of his inspection. He paid no apparent heed to her in his anxiety, and this helped to disarm her of any lingering fear she might have had. Presently he handed her the candle to hold, with a lifting of his black eyebrows, when he came to the point of examining the fiddle more closely.

“Is it—is it broke?” she burst out, half involuntarily.

He paid no apparent attention to the question, but after he had carefully examined its tawny body and slack and snapped strings, put it down on the table with the tenderness of a woman.

“*Ach, lieber Himmel!*” he cried, “*Sie ist gesund!*”

At this ejaculation, which she took to be French, the spell of the situation was broken for her. She remembered the hour, her unconventional garb, the sleeping house! But she could not help seeing, too, that the young man's seedy long black coat was saturated with salt water. Procuring, accordingly, an old pilot coat of her father's, she proffered it to him; whereupon he proceeded to dispossess himself of his own coat with an alacrity that was startling, whirling round on his heel rapidly as he did so. As in some girlish shyness she handed him the other garment, his cold fingers accidentally touched her warm wrist where her shawl had slipped away from her arm, caught by a button of the coat. At this merest touch her cheeks flushed softly, and the young man felt a sudden thrill in all his chilled pulses, and a sudden consciousness of shelter from storm, of a warm hearth, and, in a more occult degree, of the woman's restoring part, after the buffeting and the sick misery of the sea. He glanced at her, and his dark melancholy eyes were full of gratitude. But their glance exerted another influence

upon her—one not easily to be explained, one in which a half-repulsion became a whole, and most irresistible, attraction while he looked at her.

The fire by this time had filled the room with its red glow; and she turned away from him with a lurking uneasiness to let the heavy kettle, already filled with water overnight, lower on its crook. This done, she asked: "Your ship?—where, what port, was it from?"

"It is the barque *Horsa*," he began, with a most courteous smile over his own imperfect English; but he turned a shade paler, and had almost fallen, as he spoke.

She saw he was faint, and took his arm and drew him to the settle. Then she thought it better to run and call her father.

"What?" Ffoulkes called out through the door, when he had partly divined her errand—"a Fiddler at this time o' night! *Myn diawl!* let him go to the 'Three Tuns'! Send him away, send him away!"

However, further explanation, carried on with some difficulty through the closed door, reconciled the Captain to the idea of a guest who had been shipwrecked, and who was not a

mere vagrant fiddling around the countryside for a living. Moreover, the good Captain had a weakness for foreigners, having the firm conviction, fostered in him by his local cronies and customers, that he could speak most seafaring lingo with an admired intelligibility.

"A French mounseer," he said to his spouse, who was also at length awaking to the situation; "I'll talk to him; don't you get up now indeed! I'll put a tipan or two of hot brandy into him, never you fear now!"

When he had gone downstairs, he sent away Marged to prepare a room, so that she should not overhear his after ineffectual attempts to talk French to his guest. The tipan or two, when he had fallen back upon more intelligible operations with the furiously boiling kettle and a black case bottle, proved to be as stiff a tumbler of brandy and water as had ever been compounded. It made the hapless Fiddler's eyes to water, and it helped to unlock his tongue; just as the Innkeeper was getting hopelessly perplexed at his silence.

"It is the barque *Horsa!*" he began again, without troubling on this occasion to smile. He was saved the further necessity of trying

to converse with his host as it happened, for there came another knock at the outer door. This announced Riley, who, it appeared, had first brought the stranger here by Mistor Foster's instructions. He had left him at the door while he returned to the boat-landing below the Inn for a bag which had been forgotten.

"Barque *Horsa*, frae Hamborg!" said Riley briefly. "Andrer and I brought her in. She's all in bits. Nae room for him ower t' water. Leastwise, auld Foster didna care for the look on him. I thowt he looked a bit uncanny mysel', and sae I just fetched him here."

Instead of being ruffled by these intimations, the Captain, who, not being a native, was superior to local prejudices, felt only the more kindly towards his guest. He ushered the sick and weary young man to a bed-chamber, with many ridiculous little foreign phrases out of the kindness of his heart. Finally he left the room with a wonderful string of—"Gute nacht! Bonne nuit! Nos dtha!" which left the young man re-assured, but puzzled.

But Marged, in her room in the roof-tree of the house, long lay awake listening to the rushing of the wind over the housetop, and thinking

a girl's thoughts about the young man below. When she fell asleep, it was to dream uneasy dreams, in which she returned to the pier, with only a long straggling shawl to protect her from the storm. There, standing under the lantern-mast by night, she saw a dark three-masted ship driven perilously near, until, indeed, it sailed so close that the lantern cast a lurid light on to its deck, strewn with the broken spars and fragments of a terrible storm. In the midst of this wreckage stood a solitary figure, with long black hair streaming on the wind. He was fiddling away as for bare life on a fiddle that glistened with the salt spray continually descending on the ship. And then the ship suddenly turned, caught by a monstrous wave that threatened to bear it right down upon her and crush her beneath it. She cried out with affright, as it seemed to hang high in air for a moment, and so crying, she awoke. But was it her waking fancy, or was it reality, that brought to her ear the softest strain imaginable of a violin, a soothing melody, like nothing she had ever heard before?



## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

“POOR MARY ANN.”

“Robin left her broken-hearted,  
Poor Mary Ann !”

THE barque *Horsa*, with its one fateful passenger, arrived in Carne on a Friday night—an ominous time, as is well known, for all sea affairs. Next morning was market day; and when Marged woke, two hours later than usual, it was to hear a cheerful hubbub, which showed that the market was already in full cry. But as she started up, guiltily realising the lateness of the hour, another sound, within the house itself, gave her apprehensions another guise. It was the sound of a fiddle; and the music had that familiarity in an unfamiliar guise, which is so puzzling in matters of memory. Such a music she had never heard before, running into variations so fantastic, so touched, now with melancholy, now with a gay inconsequence. And yet the underlying theme was certainly an old

and familiar one. Suddenly, as a new variation began, her face flushed crimson. The tune that the Fiddler had so tricked out was simply "Poor Mary Ann," and it called to mind cruelly that last night she had left her much thumbed music book open at that tell-tale page. Now this tuneful stranger knew what an incompetent stumbler she was, and was even making fun of her proudest achievement.

The air itself is a tender and taking one, the old Welsh air "Ar hyd y Nos." But to Marged it was simply "Poor Mary Ann," her plaint and sorrowful history! To have her treated in this way was a trying thing, only to be understood by those who have cared at any time to fathom a budding girl's fancies. Even as Marged thought of it, her heroine was whirled off on a wilder flight than before. She danced, she flew, she soared; she was carried in a mad storm of harmonics up into the seventh heaven! Then, bang! a terrible clash, the poor thing had fallen to earth again, and there was an end of Poor Mary Ann!

The music stopped. Marged listened in some suspense, expecting every minute that it would

begin again ; but nothing could she hear now save the bustle of the market below, and more distantly the familiar thunder of the sea. When presently she stole rather timidly downstairs, the "long room," so called, where her piano stood, and whence the fiddling had come, was empty. The Fiddler, in fact, had been disturbed by Betsy, the maid of the Inn, who had marched in a brief while before, and deposited, with some superfluous bustle, a tray full of glasses on the table as a sign that the room was wanted. Every Saturday at noon a market "ordinary" was held in the "long room" for the benefit of the market folk who journeyed to Carne in their gigs and country carts on that day. As a consequence, the Fiddler, driven to seek a retreat elsewhere, had retired with his fiddle to a tiny chamber opposite, on the same landing. This chamber, which overlooked the market-place, was termed by courtesy the drawing-room of the Inn, and regarded by its country customers with some awe. Filled with faded finery which suggested vaguely that it had been dipped in the sea at some remote period, and with such semi-marine decorations as stuffed fish, ivory frigates in little glass cases,

ostrich eggs, Chinese pipes, Indian idols, and dried and carefully-varnished reptiles of various uncouth kinds, it was quite the least human and habitable room in the house, but it had a certain pretence of refinement which possibly pleased the Fiddler. Marged caught a clear glimpse of him as she passed the half-open door, sitting by the window, and bending anxiously over his fiddle as he doctored one of its strings.

He made no great appearance to her mind, it must be confessed, as seen so in such surroundings. His pale, pear-shaped face, long black hair, and luminous black eyes, seen in plain daylight, had an odd effect that was increased by the old sea-coat of the Captain's voluminously overwhelming his slim shoulders. Over-big as it was, it was still too short at the wrists, and the Fiddler's long hands looked the longer for it; while, from beneath it, a pair of spectral legs protruded incongruously. He looked up on hearing her step at the door, but one glance of those compelling eyes was enough. To escape a second glance, she fairly fled.

She did not pause till she reached the kitchen, which was sunk deep in the basement at the

back of the Inn, the house being practically a storey lower on this side owing to the falling away of the ground toward the riverside. A huge cavernous apartment with small sunk windows, it would have been dark save for the enormous fire heaped up in the wide old-fashioned hearth, whose light cast a generous red glow over everything. Beside it sat an old lady of fine proportions, so seated as to suggest that she did not easily rise from the solid oak settle in which she was stablished. Before it a baron of beef was roasting, and a little farther removed, hung upon another chair, the Fiddler's long black coat was comfortably drying. At sight of Marged, her step-mother, who being rheumatic was constrained to direct her kitchen campaign from her seat, and had in this way added to her vocal energies what she lost in other respects, called out in a tone harsh and quizzical rather than ill-natured:

“Whaät d'ye think on her now, waäkin' doonstairs eftor ten in the morn?”

This was addressed to the kitchen at large, and to the scullery beyond, where Betsy, the maid-of-all-work, a devoted adherent of her younger mistress, was peeling potatoes.

“Ay, what d’ye think on her?” she said, as if to the baron of beef and the Fiddler’s coat. “Elsie Marley’s nothing to her, the sleepie hizzie!”

Elsie Marley, it may be said, is the heroine of an old north-country song, much sung in the Carne countryside two or three generations ago; four lines of which may suffice to explain the allusion:

“Elsie Marley’s grown sae fine,  
She won’t get up to feed the swine:  
She lies in bed till half-past nine,  
And surely she does take her time!”

Marged was too wise to reply directly to this speech, and contented herself with one defiant glance, and with stepping upon the massive fender-rail to reach down from the high mantel-shelf a black teapot which reposed there. She was bearing it off to the table, when the old woman rose up from the settle with sudden alacrity, and gravely but forcibly took it out of her hands.

“Na,” she said; “ye’ll not can have ony tea, if ye winnot get up ony earlier!”

She nodded her head significantly as she spoke. Then, calmly re-seating herself, she

set the teapot down on the broad oven-top, and very slowly and very deliberately pushed off the settle a huge black cat that had jumped into its corner when she rose. Then she added :

“Where’s that fond Fiddlor thou wert fule enough to let into the hoose last neet? We cannot get wor cookin’ done for his lang coatie at the fire. Aä heard him fiddlin’ like mad this hour back ; but there’s nothin’ will waken ye when the humour takes ye !”

At this, Marged was walking off, her chin in the air, when a long-drawn, quavering note from upstairs caught her ear. It suggested a mischievous idea to her, for she knew how her step-mother hated to have her sacred drawing-room invaded.

“I hear him in the drawing-room now,” she murmured sily, just clearly enough for it to catch her step-mother’s apprehension.

The effect upon the old lady was instantaneous. She rose again from the settle with an air that was really rather fine, and stiffly hobbled across the kitchen flags to the foot of the staircase. There she paused a second and listened. It was enough to satisfy her

that the girl's information was not fanciful only, and she turned her strongly-marked, sagacious face back toward the fire with a movement of the head that was almost leonine, and her eyes flashed, as she called out twice: "Poll! Poll!"

It was her humour to call her maids invariably by the wrong name.

The alacrity with which Betsy appeared out of the scullery, wiping her hands on her apron, and kicking the black cat out of the way, proved that the call was not one to be disregarded. The girl was a tall, powerful, shambling, sandy-haired creature, whose wide mouth with up-curved corners and whose weak eyes contributed to give an expression of stintless good-nature and some silliness to her face.

When she reached her mistress's side, that good woman placed a heavy hand on her shoulder, and so supported, giving a deep "Humph," expressive of both dignity and physical disability for the task, began to ascend the stairs, step by step, with immense difficulty.

Meanwhile Marged, a little disturbed at



what her casual disclosure had effected, first re-possessed herself of the teapot, and then, in a fit of anguish, followed to the foot of the stairs to listen ; for she had a certain feeling for the guest upstairs, and knew her step-mother's high temper. Luckily for the hapless Fiddler and his peace of mind, the old lady's ascent was interrupted half-way. Her husband happened to encounter her outside his glazed den in the passage, and from her gait and half-smothered snorts of anger he guessed that something of moment had occurred.

"What's all this, woman?" he asked, with an admirably-feigned tone of concern for her in his voice. "Climbing upstairs like any cat! Why, woman, ye're not fit!"

"Well," she said, with excessive dignity, "ye suld not gie a wild mountebank like yon Fiddlor the run o' the hoose, Captain. I'm not gannin' to have him in my drawin'-room, that I'm not!"

"Come, now, let him be, let him be, Mistress Ffoulkes!" he said, soothingly, in reply. "The man's no common Fiddler, but a gentleman, and a good customer."

But the old lady was not to be appeased.

"Na, he sanna sit in ma drawin'-room!" she insisted, continuing her way upstairs.

The Captain retreated, much perplexed, to his den. He had all the natural courtesy of his race, and could not bear that a guest should be badly treated. But what was he to do? When the heavy step of Mrs Ffoulkes and her escort had all but reached the landing above, he could contain himself no longer, however, and he started off nimbly in pursuit. He arrived at the landing in time to see Mrs Ffoulkes release the weary shoulder of her maid, seize the handle of the door, which was now closed, and without knocking open it angrily. The Fiddler, for his part, sat softly playing a delicate passage, absorbed in his occupation, when he was thus interrupted. Glancing up, he saw the solid and wrathful face of Mrs Ffoulkes, whom he had not seen before, glaring in; and then, ere he had time to come to any conclusion about it, saw a second figure, the Captain's, who swiftly and adroitly drew the good lady away again before her already opened mouth could articulate. This done, with one inimitable wink over the

shoulder of his wife at the Fiddler, Ffoulkes quietly closed the door again. The old lady was speechless with rage and outraged dignity, which only served to contribute to the Captain's ends. Long before she recovered her aggressive powers, she had been steadily and irresistibly convoyed downstairs again by the joint offices of the Captain and his amazed *aide de camp*, Betsy.

The failure of this masterful adventure of Mrs Ffoulkes was an important item in the day's history. If she had succeeded, the whole course of the Fiddler's career might have been different. Up to this point he had had no idea of lingering in Carne an hour longer than was necessary. But during the afternoon certain events, at once trifling and momentous, succeeded, which would assuredly not have fallen out in the way that they did, unless he had continued to haunt the sacred drawing-room with his fiddle for some hours to come.

On Saturday afternoon in Carne, the serious business of the market being concluded, the idler country-folk that remained in the town, assisted by a willing contingent of sailors and the like, gave themselves up to mild roystering

and taverning. Out in the market-place, penny shows and itinerant quacks and hand-sale street auctioneers took the posts vacated by the poultry-sellers and farmers' wives; and the hubbub increased into a wilder uproar. To-day, as the afternoon grew late, a jovial party of five sailors, who were intent upon practising that very sailor-like receipt for getting sober—that is to say, exchanging one hostelry for another, were crossing the square, when their ears were saluted with a sound full of a most inviting allurements. It was clearly a fiddle, playing something very like a jig within a partly-open window on the first floor of the "First and Last." Perhaps it was some sentiment set going in him by the street music and other noise without, that had led the Fiddler to recall some old jiggling dance-tune, upon which, according to his wont, he had soon improvised several variations. So gay, so irresistible were some of these, that the five sailors paused, open-mouthed, in the roadway; their ears tickled into a ludicrous state of wonder, their ten feet already tapping unsteadily an incipient jig, which soon grew into a full-blown hornpipe. This performance drew an admiring crowd, which increased momentarily,

until the square before the Inn was choked by those who, drawing near to see the sailors dance, there and then fell instantly under the spell of the fiddle within the window. Soon the horn-pipe was flanked by others, even less orderly, and most noticeable of them one in which three women of florid physique and costume figured. They danced with more zeal than discretion, provoking the spectators into loud and louder cries of laughter and applause. This clamour grew so great, that it attracted at last the attention of the Fiddler himself. The fiddle suddenly stopped, and as the crowd turned to look up impatiently at the window, the tall, dark, unfamiliar figure of the Fiddler appeared there for a few seconds, looking down with diffident curiosity at the crowd.

“That’s nae fiddlor for me, ma hinnies!” said the leader in the dance of the three young women. “Thor’s summat uncanny in that one, unless I’m a lang way out on it! Ugh ye,” she added, shaking her superb fist at the window, as the Fiddler turned away. “Ugh ye black man! Dinnot set thoor evil eye on me!”

As for the five sailors, they were beyond the

fear of man or sprite in their glory ; and they forthwith despatched a deputy into the Inn to beg a further fiddling. While they were debating on this, a little man in spectacles, who had been listening to the music with many ejaculations of pleasure and surprise on the outskirts of the crowd, made his way impulsively past his neighbours into the Inn. A word at the bar with Captain Ffoulkes, who addressed him as Messer Tegner, and the little man had skipped upstairs in a twinkling, and tapped at the door of the Fiddler's room.

When, in something less than a quarter of an hour later, the five sailors, grown impatient, invaded the Inn passage, the brisk little man had already stealthily conveyed the Fiddler away. He had spirited him off by a side door leading into one of the tortuous riverside alleys that still skirt the market-place of Carne—a disappearance that did not lessen the first uncanny effect that the Fiddler had made on the townsfolk of Carne ! But the ill-temper of the five sailors suddenly ended in a fit of half-hysterical laughter as they remembered how they had danced.

## CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

### A SATURDAY NIGHT'S TALE.

"This night his weekly moil is at an end."  
BURNS.

EVERY Saturday night THE FIRST AND LAST INN lit all its lamps and opened all its rooms, save indeed the sacred drawing-room, to welcome its customers. Mistress Ffoulkes then installed herself in a chair by the bright fireside behind the glass cage of the narrow bar-parlour. There she presided with dignity over the proceedings, attired in black satin and a cap with puce ribands; serving to restrain by her presence and capable tongue any lawlessness in the house.

To-night, the night of the Fiddler's first day in the town, the Inn was more crowded than usual. The "First and Last" was what was called a Captains' house, and did not seek to cater for the "general"; but, beside the *Horsa*, two or three other craft had been driven in by

stress of weather, and their masters and other such superior seafarers swelled the ordinary Saturday night company. Among these strange faces, the fat placid features of the master of the *Horsa*, a Dutchman who had struck up a casual acquaintance with Mistor Fostor, shone with a full-moon-like smile on the roomful.

“But whaät set ye sae far nor’ard if ye waänted to mak’ the Thames, man,—ha?” said Mistor Fostor, as they arrived at their fifth glasses.

The Dutch skipper smiled mysteriously.

At this point an interruption was caused by the arrival of another personage of importance, an old wrinkled gentleman in a remarkable brass-buttoned blue coat with a velvet collar, and a no less remarkable tall beaver hat of ancient pattern. He was clearly, in the eyes of the present company, a figure to be reckoned with, by the ceremony with which all turned to acclaim him: “Well, Willim!”

“Three-Quarter Willim”—to state his commonly accepted soubriquet in full, having by his entrance cut short the Dutch skipper’s tale,—“Good e’en, Willim,” said Mistor Fostor, who did not mean to be done out of his dues. “Aä



was askin' Mynheer hoo it was he had run sae far nor'ard on his way to the Thames."

On the whole, this was not a wise way of putting it, considering Willim's peculiarities; but Mistor Fostor was not remarkable for tact. The venerable Willim had a great fund of sea reminiscences, very useful on occasion when the time dragged, but not to be advisedly set going when any very interesting topic was to the fore. Mistor Fostor had given the situation into his hands, and it was clear from the importance of his manner, as he took his accustomed seat by the fire, that he meant to use the opportunity. Something very like a sigh escaped from the general assemblage as they glanced from the Dutchman, who looked most provokingly matter-full, to the remorseless Willim.

"I mind me well," began the latter, in a tone that suggested a deliberate unfolding of an interminable subject-matter, "the forst time I was boond for the Thames, sailing wi' ma feyther, poor man. A lad o' fifteen I was mebbees at the time; wor schooner, it was the auld *Mary Jane* of Shields,—well, thanks, Cap'n, I'll have the old mixter, varry little lemon, mind now."

Here ensued a long pause while the old

hero received and tasted the mixture. He was so slow indeed, that Mistress Ffoulkes, who had divined something of profound interest in the Dutchman's story, and who could not see the whole of the company from where she sat, rose up in her seat at this juncture. This was partly that she might get a glimpse of the Dutch skipper, partly that she might calculate what chance there was of his ever being allowed to supersede the thrice-told reminiscences of Three-Quarter Willim. But the latter showed no sign at all of coming to any speedy conclusion, and she sat down with a sigh. Her appearance in this way over the polished mahogany of the bar had this effect however: it pleased the Skipper, who had an eye for a fine woman, and gave him a new desire to have his tale out.

"Ay, ay," at last resumed Willim, and then stopped again to reach down a churchwarden from the pipe-rack reserved for regular customers. Having looked to see the inscription,  $W\frac{3}{4}$ , on the bowl, he gravely filled it and began to puff with an audible smack of the lips, as if each puff were an important expression of opinion in itself.

“Ay, ay, the *Mary Jane*, I was saying—well . . . when we were off Flamboro’ the wind, that had been stiffish-like from E.N.E., fell away, and we brought up in a fog of the deil’s own brew, ugh, ugh! ah, ah!”

And now the old gentleman fell a victim to his own spirit of realism. Having ugh-ughed to express more convincingly the particularity of Flamborough fog, the histrionic effort so affected his throat that he was seized with a sudden and alarming fit of coughing, which left him quite unfit to articulate for some little time. As soon as he was a little recovered, Captain Ffoulkes saw his opportunity.

“Now, gen’lemen, we’re all fond of Cap’n Willim’s stories,”—here the Innkeeper winked at the company, and the slightest shade of slyness crept into his voice; “but we oughtn’t to bear hard on him when the fog gets down his chimney; so Mynheer better take his turn now, yes sure!”

“Ay, ay, haäd away, Mynheer!” called out Mistor Fostor, “’tis your torn now, and nae mistake!” Unfortunately he showed such an unwise over-alacrity in saying this, that Willim felt his reputation touched, and felt it neces-

sary to maintain his dignity by a running fire of strangling coughs all through the Dutchman's tale, which added not a little to the difficulty of understanding his plethoric English.

"You have ask of mine shib, vot it is can drove him up dis vay? It ees ver' strange thing, ven you hear öll is habben to mine ship, *Horsa!*"

The Dutchman smiled placidly round the room, and his phlegm gave the more effect to his disclosure. There fell a dead silence until Three-Quarter Willim coughed significantly, at which the other hastened to continue.

"Zat is all zat yong man, ze shib's passenger we höv!" he said, and drained his glass, with a deep nasal snort after it.

"Why, Mynheer," put in Captain Ffoulkes, "what did the ship's passenger do to affect you?"

"Avvect you, mein Gott! He blay, blay öll ze time!"

"Play!"

"Yaw, blay, blay ze feedle."

"And he can play, too!" said the other in a general way to the company. "Did ye hear him, lads, this afternoon? That was a fine turn-up!"

"Oh yaw, he gan blay ver' vell! No bisdake! Ven he blay, ze men zey danze, ze vind go round, an' ze shib is öll upsolce!"

"I thought there was summat uncanny in his blackaviz feators and his lang fingers," said Mistor Fostor.

Thus encouraged, the Skipper grew still more confidential.

"We try to put him overboard, at ze last! Vot is ze use? He fiddle away; ze men zey dance; *zey* gannot touch him!"

"Put him overboard?" said the Innkeeper at this little confession, which had set one aged gentleman in a corner chuckling to himself. "Mynheer, that's murder, yes sure! murder on the high seas!"

"He's nae man, yon Fiddlor," said Mistor Fostor sententiously. "He's a whaät-d' ye-call him, the same as the cauld lad o' Hilton, and hor that gans about Willington Quay, on Tyneside yonder."

"Ay," said another gentleman of age and experience, attired in scrupulous black, who proved to be the verger of St Michael's, and who spoke with a precise parsonical voice that oddly assorted with his Carne accent,

“true, varry true, Mistor Foster! If a man’s not canny, an’ hes a evil spirit, as in holy writ, he is not a man, properly speaking; particular,” he made haste to add, hearing a slight murmur of disapprobation from the opposite corner, “particular, if he’s not a British subjick.”

The last clause rather struck the rest of the company by the singular combination of logic and patriotism which it exhibited, and led Ffoulkes, who, like most innkeepers, was rather an opportunist on such occasions, to suppress his inclination to carry on the argument.

“And if a man’s not a man,” the verger concluded triumphantly, “why then, do whaät ye like, ye cannot morder him!”

This was too irresistible to be gainsaid by anyone. But Mistor Foster’s curiosity about the *Horsa* and her voyage was not yet at all satisfied.

“I wad have taken the beggor’s fiddle friv him,” he said reflectively; “a fiddle’s nae fire-arm.”

“Bot, mein Gott! zat is it; we gannot touch him. Ven he blay eet is like blagbeedles down mine back. Ach, I höv to dronk many schnapps, and ze shib is go öll upsolce.”

“How much schnapps can you swallow at one sitting, Mynheer,” here interposed his host, “and keep your ship’s course?”

The Skipper smiled a smile of some subtlety, and drained his glass in a calm, effortless way that was very convincing.

Captain Ffoulkes was puzzled. Was the Dutchman a consummate humbug, or simply the victim of an invincible mixture of two kinds of spirits? The question received its answer within the very next pause in the conversation, when, after some general interchange of opinion about the Fiddler’s performance of the afternoon, an uncertain noise caused Mistor Fostor to lean forward, his hand to his ear.

The noise was so far puzzling, that it might easily deceive an ear expectantly attuned to one thing. It was a combination of a piano-strain upstairs, where Marged, having so far regained faith in herself, was practising away at “Poor Mary Ann”; of a street-musician’s tin whistle in the market-place; and of the sea’s distant humming and trumpeting. For a second or so, it fairly deceived Mistor Fostor, possessed as he was by the one leading idea suggested by the Skipper’s story.

"Beggor!" he cried, "if it isn't the bloomin' Fiddlor, gannin' to bring his ugly phiz an' his deil's catgut amang us!"

The Innkeeper, who had a quicker ear, and knew better, was about to explain the illusion; but a glance at the Dutchman's face made him hold his tongue. Mynheer had indeed changed his complexion, if that seems possible, in the most convincing fashion. His small grey eyes were puffed up; his lips emitted short stertorous snorts; his fat hand travelled to his flat skipper's cap, and pulled it down, with two awkward twitches upon his forehead. As he did so, he started up from his seat.

"Why, the man's going!" murmured Ffoulkes.

"Haäd on a bit, mate!" cried Mistor Fostor.

"There's nae Fiddlor there!" said Mrs Ffoulkes; and then added as an aside to her husband, "Ask the Skipper to stop an' tak a bit o' supper wi' us!" The good lady was dying to hear more than he had told of the *Horsa* and the fateful Fiddler.

But the fat Skipper had disappeared.

"A perfect mystery!" said the verger from his corner.



Three-Quarter Willim coughed significantly, as much as to say, "That's what comes of letting me be interrupted!" But he looked round uneasily as a gust of wind blew into the passage; and then in his turn he rose from his seat.

"I'll tell ye whaät it is!" he said as he stood up, an infirmly-based biped, his curved back to the fire. "I'll tell ye what it is! Ma opinion is, the Fiddlor is a Frenchy! Boney-partie has sent him spyin', ye may be sure. There's summat varry queeör about it!"

"Summat varry queeör!" echoed the chorus.

As for Mistor Fostor, he resolved to pay a domiciliary visit to the *Horsa* at her berth next morning, while other people were abed or in church. But when Riley had pulled him down the river, half-a-mile below the Inn, her berth was bare; the *Horsa* was gone.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

### THE MUSIC SHOP IN SEAGATE-WITHOUT.

THE autumn wore on that year, more coldly and stormily than its wont on the North Sea coast. . . . Days gloomy and grey, and sullenly wet, were the rule when the easterly gales were not blowing. Carne shut itself up for the winter even before its usual time. It was the sort of weather to try the spirits of a pleasure-loving girl, with a lively appetite for all the natural delight of life—all that colour and stir and fine sensation, of which she had heard and read; and Marged often stood looking out on the river from the streaked windows of the long room, moping and indulging girlish dreams of wider horizons and more entertaining scenes than those of Carne.

On such a day, a Thursday afternoon, and Thursday always seemed to her the greyest and least interesting day of the week, she rose up rebellious after many long, dull hours indoors, and decided to go out,—anywhere to

escape the tedium of the house and the rain on the window-panes.

Outside the air was fresh at least ; the rain had turned into a Scotch mist with a distinct salt fragrance. Unless she crossed the river by the ferry-boat, the only route open to her that had much interest was the Seagate, and down it she took her way accordingly. But the gloom of her mood still refused to be shaken off because of any contemplation of ribands and other such fal-lals in one window, or new silks in another, and at length she found herself passing through the old half-broken down covered gateway from which the thoroughfare originally took its name, dividing it into two halves, Seagate-Within and Seagate-Without. Seagate-Within contained the old houses of the town as it was primitively constituted—old red-tiled two-storied houses of the Jacobean period mostly, with bulging shop-windows and dark interiors. But Seagate-Without at the opening of the century was an uncertain, half-finished, indeterminate thoroughfare, with here and there a detached row of new houses which had not yet received the humanising that time and weather can alone give. At the remoter end

of this region stood a few new houses, built in the plainest, poorest terrace style, of a muddy, badly-baked red brick. They stared out incongruously upon the melancholy sand-flats that lay beyond, and at their most exposed seaward corner a comparatively large shop, the only one in the terrace, attracted Marged's attention as nothing else had done in her walk so far.

Within its large forlorn windows, of all inconceivable things, were ranged the delicate and exotic shapes of musical instruments, pianos chiefly, with a few fiddles and flutes interspersed. Over its door, set in the corner of the building crosswise, and over its windows ran the elaborately scrolled and painted legend :

JOSEF TEGNER.

and again, more elaborately :

JOSEF TEGNER & Co.

PIANOFORTE EMPORIUM & MUSICAL DEPOT.

According to a plan less commonly adopted at that period than now, the shop was built out as if by afterthought from the house behind it,

and beside its large windows, its flat leaden roof contained several skylights intended to give a light and airy effect to the interior. Instead of this, they made the place, especially on such a day, look peculiarly unprotected and shelterless, and so exposed, in fact, to all appearance that the poor pianos seemed almost to stand in the open air. The great window panes, moreover, were covered with drops and streaks of rain, and the melancholy plight of these delicate and ladylike instruments could not but appeal to so sympathetic an observer as Marged as she passed the place.

For a few seconds she paused, looking into the forlorn and yet enticing interior, coveting greatly one smaller upright piano with a red satin bosom. From it her eye roved farther, and then she started: at the glass shop-door beyond, she saw somebody standing gazing out upon vacancy—the Fiddler! He had been half-hidden from her unsuspecting gaze at first by some hanging sheets of music; but now as she sped off she took in the whole vivid impression of his pale face, luminous eyes, long black hair, and dispirited droop of the lips. His attitude, as he stood there behind the wet panes of the glass

door, where he had evidently been standing for some time, was one of utter *ennui*. When his glance caught hers as she hurried on, he recognised her, she saw, becoming conscious of a profound bow.

Thereafter she had reached the pier, and had been standing for some little time at its end, idly watching the great lazy waves, when a sound, or a mere conjecture, led her to look round. Ah, there was a solitary figure approaching, attired in a long cloak, a hat of Neapolitan pattern on the head. She felt fluttered and embarrassed as the Fiddler drew nearer, and would have escaped. But there was no escape for her save by the sea, or by passing him. What was she to do?

Like other maids in a like perplexity, she ended, of course, by doing nothing. The Fiddler was at her side ere she had formed any clear idea as to whether the interest of such a meeting would compensate for the maidenly embarrassment it would cause her. The young man's foreignness, his foreign speech, something foreign in his eyes, something remote and unaccustomed to her mind in his whole bearing, all helped to increase her natural shyness.

However, now that he was at her side, bowing and speaking in a foreign voice no doubt, but with a certain gentleness and kindness in its tones, she began to take courage.

"Is it, you like the sea—so? Mamzelle—Ffoulk'?" Ah, then, he remembered her name! She could not forbear a smile as he said it, so strange as it sounded on his lips.

"Yes," she said, rather at a loss to define the particular feeling that she cherished for so familiar a thing, "I'd dearly like to be a sailor!"

"Oh," he cries, with an incredulous, slightly guttural little laugh that he had, "a sailohr, a see-mann! Is that good for pretty faces—Mamzelle?" He looked at her with a half-abstracted, half-admiring glance,—how unlike the blunt boyish looks of Andrew Fostor under similar circumstances!

"Shall you come?" he said then, oddly and abruptly, and led the way to the edge of the wooden platform of the pier.

They stood there, looking out into the pale mist that draped the North Sea to-day. This veil hid all but the nearer circuit of the grey waters, but it added immensely at the same time to the sense of their vague infinitude.

"Is it—is many ships sail from here to the Mediterranean—to Italia?" he asked suddenly.

Surprised at the question, she said—

"To Italy? Not often! . . . Do you want to go to Italy?"

He bowed a profound affirmative.

"Over there," he said, with a wave of his long hand towards the outstretching grey water—"in Italy—the sun shines; people are happy; it is musique, musique all the time! Ah, 'tis in Italy I can live. Here—this cold sea—this cold place—here I cannot live!"

He shivered even as he spoke, and coughed; a deep, distressingly vital cough. The cough made her uneasy for his sake, and made her smother her desire to say how much Carne and this cold sea meant to her.

"You are not well, I think!" she said, simply, turning toward the town. "Let us go back!"

They marched back together, he struggling with his cough uncomfortably, and finding no breath for talking. When at length they reached the music shop—

"I am sorry," he said; "you musz pardon!"

He had hardly uttered the words before the glass shop-door opened, and a tall, sallow



woman, of foreign aspect, her gray hair rather frivolously frizzled and powdered, emerged with a volley of French—

“*Méchant, méchant*,—oh wicked, wicked!” that was her refrain, as with a side glance of much interest at the girl, she hauled the Fiddler into the shop.

“The doctor have said he will die if he go out in this sea fog!” she said in explanation.

So coughing, laughing a little, and bowing out of Madame’s clutch his farewell, the Fiddler disappeared, and she resumed her way hastily home.

In two or three moments Mme. Tegner reappeared at the shop door, apparently with the idea of speaking to Marged. But by this she was halfway up the Seagate, with a mind divided betwixt the Fiddler and the Italy he loved, while a half-formed wish that he would not go away from Carne lurked in the uncertain background of her sentiment.

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

### THE TEGNERS.

“In sweet Musick is such art.”

IT may be remembered that on the afternoon when the Fiddler had attracted his audience in the market-place, a knock on the door of his room at the “First and Last” had served to introduce a brisk, spectacled visitor who bounced in excitedly upon him, apologising for the intrusion with many manueflections and politenesses. This was M. Tegner, music master and proprietor of the music shop, who was delighted at this unlooked-for discovery of one whom he judged, by what he had heard of his playing, to be no common musician. So he protested in voluble French ; and, after a brief conversation, he did not hesitate to place his house, hospitality, and all available good offices, at the disposal of this strange young man whom the fortunes of the day had conjured up in a flying moment.

The existence of M. Tegner himself in such a community as Carne, was, it may be thought, surprising enough in the first quarter of this century. He had been formerly a dancing master at Humbro', coming to Carne, which was making some first attempts to turn itself into a seaside resort, to give lessons once a week. Then Madame fell ill of a quinsy, and the doctor ordered her sea air; and this coinciding with the shipwreck of the cargo of grand pianos aforementioned, tempted M. Tegner to venture, unwisely enough, on the enterprise of his misplaced music-shop, which was fifty years before its time. He borrowed the hundred or two of guineas required for this speculation, a debt which pursued him day by day; and had for reward the satisfaction of being so far the sole representative of the higher arts in the place.

On the present occasion, when M. Tegner reached his door, he ushered the Fiddler in with excitable cordiality, and indicated with natural pride of possession the noble company of Kümmel grand pianos ranged around—a pride not at all diminished by the fact that they were not paid for. And then—then he fell into

the devil's own stew as he thought on Madame sitting upstairs, probably in any mood but the right one. Here was a dilemma, since he could not bear to seem wanting in courtesy even for a second. The Fiddler probably divined something of what was passing, for he could not forbear a faint smile.

In answer to that smile M. Tegner grimaced most piteously. Then, "*Mais—c'est Madame ! comprends ? Il faut— . . .*" and the little man was gone, wondering and trembling as to the result of his quest.

He was gone so long that the Fiddler had ample time to look about him, and presently was tempted by an invitingly open piano to touch the keys softly. From that, as time still hung on his hands, it was easy to let them wander off into a few prelude chords, and then again into a little fugue of Bach ; but still his host did not return. The fugue suggested an old fantasia of his own composition, and, the spirit of the thing seizing him, he fairly let himself go, forgetting everything but the music. Still no M. Tegner ! Finally, he had embarked on an extravagant enough improvisation of certain themes that had lately occurred to him,

suggested partly by the North Sea, partly by his own fiddling in the earlier afternoon.

In the middle of this flight, he was arrested by a sound behind and yet apparently above him. He glanced round, and saw that at the very end of the shop, on a little staircase leading up into the house, stood a fairly tall grey-haired woman, whose lips were just relaxing from a severe pout of disapprobation into an exclamation of involuntary admiration.

*"C'est un maitre, ma foi!"*

With this word, Madame, who had come intending to play the part of a tyrant, acknowledged her defeat, and ran down the three remaining stairs, changing her half-prepared little speech of politely but unmistakably conveyed dismissal into one of warm welcome.

Hereupon Mme. Tegner led the way into her own apartments; with an air of delightful independence as far as her husband was concerned. It was part of her treatment of that ridiculous little man; first to snub him severely whenever he propounded any scheme, and then to adopt the scheme as if it were entirely her own. The third stage of the process was, supposing the scheme after all to come to

nothing, which very often proved to be the case, to repudiate all responsibility for it.

By polishing and beeswaxing the floors, and by various little touches of Gallic art, Madame had converted her parlour behind the music shop into a rather taking apartment. Here she installed her guest with a grace that twenty years or more of sordid struggling with fate and impecunious music and dancing pupils had not been able to destroy. She lit a small bronze lamp, for the dusk was closing in, made up the fire, and then turned to exchange the courtesies of the occasion with the Fiddler. They talked in French; the Fiddler proving conversant with that tongue, though he was not much given to express himself at any time, save in music.

“Your ship was driven into this dreary place, M’sieur? Is it then to a port farther south that M’sieur was bound?”

“To London!” replied the Fiddler, with a bow whose courtesy made up for the curtness of his communications.

“M’sieur has friends in London?”

“*Hélas*, not one!”

“M’sieu goes to find his fortune there; is it

not so? Or is it that he has some fortune already?"

At this point, M. Tegner, who had diplomatically loitered behind in the shop, arrived, carrying the green bag containing the precious violin, which the Fiddler had brought along with him to the music shop, and left reposing on a chair there.

The young man smiled a significant smile as he caught sight of it, indicating it by a wave of one long hand, as if he would say—

“Madame, there is my estate!”

At this simple gesture, M. and Mme. Tegner looked at each other with a sudden intelligence. They had known in their own history what it meant to arrive in that monster among cities without friends and with little money.

“London—London is the devil!” here put in M. Tegner unadvisedly. A turn of Madame’s head suppressed him promptly.

“Pardon my husband,” she said. “Josef is very ignorant. It would be more polite, Josef, if you were to ask M’sieur to accept our meagre hospitality while he stays in this benighted fishing village; for it *is* no better than living in a herring barrel!”

In this way did the Fiddler come to be domiciled under the roof of the worthy pair, in the unlikeliest part of all the North Sea coast. He was unable to make his escape, as it turned out, moreover; at least for some little time to come. He had barely tasted Madame's excellent coffee, as they sat and listened to her own early reminiscences of a hard-hearted London, when the watchful lady's eyes saw that he had suddenly turned pale. And then he began to cough, and an ominous red spot appeared on the handkerchief he had put to his mouth.

"*Ah mon Dieu!*" cried the good woman, as she divined his predicament—"We must put him to bed! Suzanne, come! Josef! run for that dreadful doctor with the large teeth! he! he! *mon Dieu, mon Dieu!*" With these exclamations upon the fate that she had found follow her with so many reminders of this order, Mme. Tegner accepted the situation, and proved herself more than equal to its needs.

But the doctor with the large teeth, who was really not a bad fellow, forbade the Fiddler to leave his bed for some days to come, and told Madame, moreover, that the young man would



attempt the sea again at this time of year at his extreme peril.

Ere the Fiddler had been three days in their house, the Tegners had impulsively adopted him, in default of any child or son of their own. And for his part he seemed to have the helplessness and the fatalistic acquiescence in his lot, that one often finds in artists of his order. He took his place in the household as if he had always intended to make that his home, and played his fiddle to the Tegners with the same inspiration that he might have used to conquer London.

M. Tegner and he took to playing duets together in the shop, in the absence of customers; until the very panes of the forlorn windows learnt to tremble musically. On yet another walk that Marged took seaward, one still drearier afternoon of that drearily wet November, she heard as she neared the corner where it stood, a richly sumptuous strain of music. It seemed to suggest, as it caught her ear in occasional chords and half cadences, that the Orient had shed its fragrance and scattered its most exquisite colours in one extravagant utterance to this grey, thrice-desolate street.

Its spell was irresistible. She crossed the road to hear more, and its effect grew upon her so that the music shop took on the aspect of some palace of delight. Its mean lines, straight, poor, crudely coloured, each became, as it were, curved and intertwined with the phantasy of an emotion which she was never afterwards to dissociate from it. It was a dual strain of violin and piano that she heard, and the combination was new and miraculous to her ear. It held her spell-bound with its rich romanticism. When she had reached the lee of the house, she stood on the wet pavement, and halted, drinking in Paradise through her ears. A moment only, it seemed, but many passed ere that sumptuous music had marched on to its close. And when at last she retook her way seaward, the grey North Sea looked different to her; the colour and meaning of her day was changed. There was a world beyond that pale water, a world of a rare affluence and enchantment, to which she might yet find her way; and the magician who held the key to it all was the Fiddler.

## CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

### CARNE QUAY.

“Maids nays are nothing !

BECAUSE of Mistor Fostor, and for other reasons, Carne Quay loomed large in the daily life of the inmates of the “First and Last.” The back windows of the Inn looked across the river at its irregular roofs and half-decayed quay and waterside wharves and boat-landings; and among these, the red-tiled roof of Mistor Fostor’s house and the black-and-tan boat-sheds adjoining (where Andrer Fostor had lately set up as a boat-builder in a small way) made a group by themselves.

The Carne coble-builders were a famous set of craftsmen in their day; and Andrer Fostor, who had served his time with the idea of becoming, like Mistor Fostor, a privileged pilot, had lately taken instead to boat-building, inspired by Peter Lighthouse. But Mistor Fostor had quarrelled with Peter, still more recently, with

the result that Andrer had left his yard. Now that young man was driven to continue his craftsmanship under difficulties on his own account. In the intervals of piloting, he built or mended an occasional coble in these ramshackle boat-sheds of his father's establishment.

Mistor Fostor's plans for Andrer did not end there. His eye had fallen with favour on Marged Ffoulkes, who had been a school-fellow of the lad's six or seven years ago, and who was generally understood to be the presumptive heiress to the accumulations of the "First and Last," which made no mean dower. Moreover, she was, as we know, a maid that any man might be proud to marry.

More than once in his cups, Mistor Fostor had been known to confess :

"If it werena for the auld woman, I wadna mind taking Margret Fox mysel'! But the missus is slow makin' up her mind to onything: sae Andrer maun have the lass!"

In fact, Mistress Fostor had lingered on for many years in the uncomfortable *rôle* of a half-crippled helpmeet to her undiminished lord and master, to whose occasional ill humours she

largely owed her present condition. No doubt it was trying to so fine a creature to have an infirm and dragging mate ; but the marriage laws, still uncomfortably secure, were stiffly kept up in the days of this story. Andrer in his simplicity devoutly abetted his mother in her desire to live as long as possible ; and for his own part never thought of marrying, save as a remotest contingency. He knew the Marged Ffoulkes project, but that young lady had not much affected his fancy latterly. This was the position of things, when, one morning, Marged was commissioned to carry a jar of "rum-honey" to Mistress Fostor, who had lately added to her other ailments what her husband termed the "brownkippers"—that is, bronchitis.

It was one of those half-bright late autumnal mornings, when there is a sort of premonition of frost in the air, and when on the river a pale mist is apt to lie in uncertain stretches, and give a pleasantly unfamiliar effect to its most familiar reaches. Marged, who liked the unaccustomed aspects of things best, was delighted as she got into the old tub that belonged to the Inn, and began to pull leisurely across stream. The tide was nearing the full, still running up

and she was easily able to get carried out of her course, which she rather courted, since it gave her a further excuse for exploring the intermittent patches of mist which hung upon the water.

She had set the jar of honey on a seat in the stern in a critical position, which the least bump of the boat might upset, for this added just that spice of risk to her voyage necessary to lift it into the category of interesting experiences. Otherwise it was devised with no want of craft on her part. She had made some feint of pulling against the tide at first, so as to allow for the being carried out of her course by the current; but in mid-stream she was diverted from her main plan of action by a floating painted broom of foreign make, probably dropped overboard from some Dutch vessel in port. To secure this, not so much for the sake of the broom itself as for the mere joy of pursuit, necessitated her pulling round and changing her course. And when at last she had overtaken the broom, instead of lifting it into the boat, which was the obvious thing to do, she found it more amusing to attach it to a line and take it in tow.

This proceeding required much precarious

balancing over the stern of the tub, with one foot ingeniously crooked under a seat to act as a balance or lever; an attitude not in itself graceful, perhaps, but one which, practised by a figure full of lithe curves, might well be found attractive by a simple observer.

As it happened, Andrer Fostor, looking from the upper storey of his boat-shed, whose door opened directly on to the river, had a full view of this wayward manoeuvre. But at its most interesting point the boat drifted out of sight into a thin veil of mist, and he saw it no more, till, a few minutes later, on descending the outer staircase of the shed, he saw the tub had stranded on a foreshore, and that the girl was trying vainly to shove it off. Her predicament, to be sure, was not a serious one; but he felt that circumstances rather demanded his going to the rescue.

His general state of mind about her, however, might be known by the deliberate way in which he went on this gallant mission. He stopped to look at a pan of pitch which was in process of cooking over a fire-lamp with three crooked legs, and even delayed to stir it up meditatively with a stick, rather expecting to see the tub set afloat at any minute.

He was recalled to a sense of his masculine obligations by his father's stentorian voice:

"Why, Andrer! doesn't thou see the lass yonder, stranded an' like to be drooned under our varry nose? Haway, lad, an' set the piece off. Haway, leave the pitch!"

Mistor Foster stood at the door of his abode, in a morning undress of shirt sleeves and duck breeches, a sou'-wester on his head. Compared with him, Andrer had hardly a single point or feature in common. Not so heavily built for his years, he was still well and strongly made, with his long arms and fine shoulders picturesquely enough set forth by a blue shirt and a tartan neckerchief. But his face might be the face of a Norman gentleman, with a well-bred straight nose and good long-lipped mouth, though with grey eyes, brown hair that slightly curled, and a short brown moustache.

"Riley," he called to his lieutenant, and Riley's red head popped out of the lower part of the boat-shed in response to the summons: "come and help me get *Sally* out, sharp!"

*Sally* was a light boat which required to be extricated from a cluster of others, big and little, lying under the boat landing hard by. Stepping



into her, thereupon he pulled off with the easy sculls of a waterman, and fifty strokes brought him within hail of Marged. Seeing his approach, she made frantic efforts to free herself without his aid. But in vain. The still incoming tide only floated the boat farther up on to the gravel at every effort she made. Fairly beaten, she sat down helplessly, flushed with her exertions and with her sense of being caught in such a plight. She had all a girl's dislike to be thought incapable in anything usually given over to the other sex.

She looked at him with an expression half-defiant, half-mischievous, as he pulled up.

"Well, Margret?" he said in the most good-natured tone in the world.

"Well, Andrer?" her tone slightly mocked his, and left the burden of further conversation on his own head. To relieve the tension of the occasion he managed, first, to fish the Dutch broom into his own boat.

"What kind of a fish is this ye've been catching?" he asked, as he detached the line from it.

"Is that the bait in yon jar?"

"No," she said in her airiest tone, "that's some rum-honey (only it's made with treacle)

for what your father calls your mother's 'brown-  
kipers.'"

By this he had made fast the line to his own boat, at as close a range as possible, and proceeded to pull away calmly.

"Mind the traäcle pot!" he cried.

The warning came too late. The slight jerk with which the boat was dislodged from its sticking place was enough to upset the jar, which fell with an ominous "plomp" into the bottom of the tub.

She was much diverted by this accident, and laughing, with the blade of an oar deftly lifted the cracked and bleeding jar over the gunwale of the tub.

"There," she said cheerfully. "Now I can go home again, if you'll let me go?"

"Better come and see my mother. I wish ye would, Margret!" he responded, looking at her.

In fact, she looked infinitely taking as she sat there, her oars ready, her red lips pursed mischievously, her eyes dancing, her cheeks slightly flushed. He began to feel a disinclination to part with her. This was not the mere girl he had gone to school with. His own cheeks

flushed slightly, as he found her eyes scanning him critically.

"No!" she said, after a pause: "Goodbye! I'm going back."

He let the cord go regretfully. The tide was just at the turn; she had already pulled the tub's head round for the opposite shore.

"I'm sorry about the treacle," she called out as she began to row away; "tell Mrs Foster I'm sorry."

"All right!" he sang out, secretly pleased at her relenting so far. Then feeling a further accession of admiration for her, with one strong stroke he was alongside her, and put his hand on the gunwale of her boat, detaining it.

His feeling was plainly reflected on his face. To relieve the situation, she was impelled to say, as she pretended to look into the water for the lost jar, "All the same, it was your fault."

He laughed boyishly. "Well, to make up, will ye go with me to St Andrew's dance at the Ha'?" St Andrew's night, as we shall see, was a great occasion for the young people of Carne.

"Na, na, no!" she said, "unless you'll let me go now?" She dipped her oars, ready to go.

There was a slight spice of girlish coquetry in this, which he did not fail to detect. When he released her and, drooping her pretty head over her oars she rowed off, was that a sly laugh which she bent lower still to hide? Whether or no, there was certainly something in her manner that he had not seen in her before. She had suddenly become for him something of a problem; and when a young woman becomes a problem for a young man, it means that he is on the high road to falling in love. His heart already danced in anticipation, as he counted the days to St Andrew's night.

But Marged, as she neared the landing below the Inn, caught a glimpse of the white topsails of a small schooner at the bend of the river below, which was probably sailing with this tide. It led her to think of the sea and all that lay outside Carne—a world full of fine stirring life, of ships, men and women, and foreign lands. The thought of them made her sigh as she stepped out of her boat, and she said:

“If I were a man I would not stay in Carne,—ah, if I were only a man.”

But even as she said it, a flitting vision of

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Andrer, as he sculled his boat toward her with so much unconscious ease and strength, was in her thought. After all, was he not more of a man than the pale and melancholic Fiddler?

## CHAPTER THE NINTH.

### A NOVEMBER NIGHT.

“ Now winter nights enlarge  
The number of their hours,  
And clouds their storms discharge  
Upon the airy towers.”

CAMPION.

IT was Sunday night, a dark night, of abrupt gusts from the sea, that forced open doors and rushed round street corners, and then suddenly died away again, with an inconsequence more disturbing than the behaviour of a decent and steady gale.

M. Tegner was anxious about the weather. He had invited the Fiddler to go across to Carne Quay with him that evening, to the Catholic chapel there, where he officiated as choir-master. Mme. Tegner had said it was not a fit night for a sick man to be abroad. Her husband went down to the side door to see if it was as bad as the uncomfortable noise of the wind round the exposed corner of the house, and its melancholy rumble in the chimneys, seemed to testify.

"Pah! it smells salt," was all he said, on reaching the upstairs again, where Madame and the Fiddler sat.

"It always does that," she remarked. "It's this wicked wind I don't like. 'Twill give you your death of cold," she added, turning to the Fiddler.

The Fiddler was a fatalist.

"Not unless my time is come!" he said, rising up and stretching out his long arms. This decided the matter, and the two set off a few minutes later for the ferry.

The Chapel, dedicated to St Hilda, lies among the narrow waterside back streets of Carne Quay, where you may see it to this day. The influence of the ancient Catholic family living at Carne Hall, the titular seat for centuries of the Earls of Carne, had served to retain it where it stood—one of those rare original Catholic foundations to be found in the north country. All this did M. Tegner instil into his guest's ears on their way thither. But, as he might have seen, that young man was more interested during the service in the three young ladies from Carne Hall, who sat at an angle convenient for observation, than he was

in the building, or the music, or in Father Martin's easy oratory.

As the three girls, befurred, well-dressed, distinguished, so different to the rest of the small congregation, passed out after the service, they glanced never so slightly at the dark foreign face of the Fiddler. He saw then that the eldest of the three, who walked last, limping slightly, had a high bred but singular face, set, like an early eighteenth-century portrait, with curly flaxen hair, and softly illuminated by very pale blue eyes. A little touch of hectic red in the cheeks, which the Fiddler, in his foreigner's simplicity, took for rouge, completed the portrait, save for certain black satin ribands that flowed from a large hat and met gracefully under her chin. The Fiddler was impressed.

"Who are they—those three?" he whispered to M. Tegner in the mixed tongue in which they commonly conversed, as they left the chapel.

"Ah! the young ladies from Carne Hall. The eldest, the blonde, the lame, is my pupil, Lady Henrietta—she is very *sympathetique*. Dances? Sings? No, pianoforte. She has a touch, and she has the *je ne sais quoi* of the art, my dear Karl."



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Karl, Karl Pastal, was the name by which the Fiddler was known to the Tegners and his more intimate ring of acquaintances. Carne never learnt to know him save by his name and *rôle* of The Fiddler.

As the two passed down by the narrow, unsavoury, waterside back streets and alleys to the ferry, on their way back to Carne, M. Tegner drew a fanciful picture enough of the ancient decayed Carne family, and of my Lord himself, who had succeeded to the title by a mere contingency, on the death of the direct heir. My Lord's father had married the daughter of a Newmarket training stable, and given his children a Newmarket education; but as for my Lady, she came of good stock, and was a prize when my Lord carried her off twenty-four years ago. Now she was a poor, hysterical, half-witted creature, who had suffered for her husband's sins, and wandered about the deserted wing of Carne Hall, crying:

“Where's Rupert?”

Rupert was her first child and only boy, drowned at ten years of age from a sailing boat off Carne Hall, under more dreadful circumstances than M. Tegner made clear; for

he was so pleased with his picture of the poor lady wandering through the empty rooms with her constant refrain, which he repeated in English and pronounced,—“Verr’s Ruper-rt?” that he iterated this part of the tale at the expense of the rest. When they were embarked in the ferry boat, he would have continued, but that the Fiddler began to cough, probably affected by the river chill, and frightened him out of the rest of his narrative.

It was during the pause that followed, while they were hanging in mid stream, and the gloom and the clinging damp airs oppressed them with sombre thoughts, and while the ferrymen fought the tide, there came to them another voice, unexpectedly, and, therefore, thrice memorably, out of the darkness, and drove all else out of their thoughts.

It was a fragment merely, the end of some unfamiliar melody, in the minor key, which the voice, a clear girlish treble, sustained with a singular sweetness. In the first uncertainty as to its source, it reached the Fiddler’s ears like a sleeper’s summons from some unascertained corner of the night. The strain was wild, melancholy in the extreme, full of an

aspiration beyond words ; and this lonely voice expressed it with a sorrowful note that went to his heart.

He was still in the stage of nervous susceptibility that some days of sickness and an indoor life are apt to leave behind. The solemn ritual at the Chapel had affected him ; the music of the Mass ; the presence of the girls from Carne Hall, and M. Tegner's story of their mother. And now the darkness, and the chill of the night, weighed upon him ; the river affected him, the cheerlessness, the desolation, of it. This voice and its solitary song went with his mood. As he thought upon it, it began again, and he at once related it to the lighted windows of the "First and Last," which served travellers who crossed the river by night as a beacon. The plaint, if he had known, had a touching refrain of "Caersalem," and a land of promise beyond these dark nights of earth. But it was a sealed tongue to the Fiddler. The words, however, did not so much matter ; to him, music was the mother-tongue. It was the old cry of earth to heaven, that the singers, as well as the saints, spend their lives in trying to utter. And he understood.

“Did you hear?” said M. Tegner, as they stepped out of the boat. “That is the little girl at the Inn.”

“So she can sing!” said the Fiddler; and he began to whistle two or three bars of the melody absently.

Ere many days were passed, he had fitted its tune with such effect to his fiddle, that Madame Tegner, after hearing it one night, fell a-weeping, her head on her knees, homesick for “La Belle France!” France, need it be added, was Madame Tegner’s heaven.

## CHAPTER THE TENTH.

### THE MUSICAL FIDDLE.

“ To his sweet lute Apollo sung the motions of the spheres,  
The wondrous order of the stars, whose course divides the years.

ONE result of this Sunday night adventure was that M. Tegner, happening to call in at the “ First and Last ” one cold afternoon on his way to a music lesson, suggested to Captain Ffoulkes, over a glass of the famous Dieppe smuggled brandy, served only to the elect, that his daughter ought to take singing lessons, and that Mme. Tegner was willing to give them for a very trifling consideration.

Now singing is a weakness with every Welshman ; Ffoulkes had once had a very sweet tenor himself, and M. Tegner had a very flattering way with him. An hour was actually appointed before he left the Inn, when the pupil one evening shortly was to go to Madame for a first lesson. Mistress Ffoulkes, it may be said, heartily disapproved ; but this only whetted Marged's

desire for it. A girl of spirit, her five wits were quickest when threatened.

On that evening, as she stepped into the market-place, she felt the frost in the air, and her pulses danced. The line of familiar dark roofs, the lighted windows, had a friendliness for her ; and above the stars shone like frost-crystals. Her high spirits, her adventurous eyes, turned everything into matter-of-fancy. Youth, after all, is your only idealist, and can turn a dark street into a highway of romance.

In this taking she came to the music shop, and felt for the moment a little defeated to see no light in its windows. The place was closed for the night. She went round to the side door, and knocked. At first, no response ! A window showed a glimpse of red, lamp-lit curtains ; and she heard a muffled, but brisk, exchange of voices.

She knocked again ; and after a few seconds the door was opened. There stood M. Tegner, who had forgotten to tell Madame of the new pupil's advent. He threw up his hands in an histrionic amaze as he discerned who it was, and then ushered her in to wait until he arranged matters. A faint fragrance of coffee, and a

casual note struck on a piano, as if some one had been sitting at the instrument and chatting so, instead of actually playing, reached her senses together. That moment of suspense, in that ridiculous little lobby, counted in her own history. That single note was the keynote of a new music and a new emotion.

The moment over, and M. Tegner re-appeared in a marvellous good humour with himself. Clearly Madame had been propitious. He ushered the pupil in, with a politeness that to her, used to the rough manners of the Inn, was almost extravagant. The Fiddler it was who had been seated at the piano, and now rose, bowing so that his long black hair fell down in a portentous cataract. Madame, for her part, took an original view of the situation. She made the girl sit in an arm-chair, and after scanning her closely, poured out for her a tiny cup of black coffee.

"There!" she said, "that will gif you courage; for you s'all sing to us."

Marged looked round in dismay at the room, and the three people who sat there; people, as it seemed to her, not only of another race, but of another sphere. Madame's grey eyes were so

fixed, her thin-lipped mouth had so quizzical a wrinkle at the corners, that her victim feared they were simply bent on amusing themselves. She looked down; her cheeks flushed, which they were always ready to do.

Madame smiled more sympathetically.

"What then?" she added now, "you think we sing to you. Ver' well. That is the singer." She indicated the Fiddler. "His violin is sing like any Malibran. *N'est-ce-pas, Josef?*"

Josef acquiesced, and laughed. The Fiddler laughed softly, with the air of an artist who is sure of his art, and need use no mock modesty. Madame laughed again. They all seemed in great spirits.

"*Mais, vois tu!*" Madame began, pointing to the fiddle in a corner. The Fiddler, without more ado, lifted it on to a chair, and opened it. Madame took her place at the piano, and struck a few richly prelusive chords. Then Marged tasted her coffee: it was nectar. The walls of the room fell away. Her ears were her eyes; she lost sense of present time and space.

The Fiddle sang; and a hundred shut doors seemed to open. Into one she found her way;



one opening in a wide staircase, up which she went. Suddenly a gust of wind swept her feet from under her ; her head reeled ; she shut her eyes fast, but it was no use.

The garden of a summer night, full of roses ; this is what her closed eyes saw. At her side walked one, a lover, whose words made her afraid. His words grew passionate ; he drew her closer. It was—Andrer ?

His lips brushed her cheek. Phew ; they were cold as death ! An abrupt chord ; a harsh note of evil sounded. The gardens had vanished. The music had changed to a march. Through dark streets she marched with a multitude of melancholy folk dressed in black. But as the soldiers returning from burying one of their file play their liveliest tunes, so to this sad music a merry succeeded. A jig, a gavotte, a reel, in rapid succession : all the world seemed to be dancing. But particularly one little man, dressed in motley, and spectaclled, who took up a larger and larger part of the scene. And when the dance ended, he was still before her, his small head, covered with bristly grey hair, drooping ; his motley changed into plain black ; his spectacles gazing benignly upon her. A last

movement; pensive, retrospective, and the music was over.

She drew a long sigh, and returned to the present surroundings of the little French parlour. The Fiddler was calmly putting down his fiddle, as if nothing had happened. As he moved across the line of the candle light, betwixt the candles that lit the piano, and M. Tegner, she recognised that she had been staring, unconsciously all the time, at the latter gentleman. The movement of the Fiddler's bow and bowing arm had cast a flickering shadow on his face and form: in short, M. Tegner himself was the little dancing man. But as for her romance—her first romance; it had lasted a brief five minutes, and it was all over. But the strange thing was, that the Fiddler's art had done for Andrer what he had not yet succeeded in doing for himself. It had made him into a warmly human, a wooing, a conscious lover. As for the Fiddler himself, her feeling for him was different. He fascinated her by his fiddling and his unfathomable eyes; and yet, he left her heart cold!

But the music was done, the spell broken.

She was standing, ere she knew it, at Mme. Tegner's side, by the piano ; and trying to sing the notes that her mistress struck, and feeling that she failed dismally. Fortunately, the master magician, the Fiddler, and his dancing puppet, M. Tegner, had left the room.

She was still thinking of what she had heard, instead of the music before her ; so that a certain asperity crept soon into Madame's comments :

" You have a voice—yes ! But you use it—like a pig ! That is how pigs sing, all in the throat ! "

For half-an-hour she struggled on, feeling that she was a fool ; disappointed with herself, dismayed, mortified. She had got behind the scenes, and saw the machinery of her paradise.

As it happened, whether by design or no, the Fiddler descended the stairs in hat and cloak as she was being ushered out by Madame. He offered to escort her home, in spite of Mme. Tegner's almost hysterical protests.

" You will catch your death—on such a night—a ! All men are silly ; *mais* you are, the silly most ! " and so forth.

When the pair were passing up Seagate-Without :

“Is Madame seem so difficult in the singing?” he asked. “It is take so long, long time to sing—as we say—*parfaitement*.”

She pouted a girl’s “Yes! I suppose!”

“But at the last,” he continued, “if so Mamzelle is sing as the gr’reat ones—as Grisi, or Malibran, the world is at the feet then: London, Paris, Milan! in the stead of this dirty town—pah!”

At this point, her concern at hearing him depreciate the Seagate, which she secretly found so interesting, with its small shops and their wares, was replaced by a cold thrill as she caught sight of a venerable figure toddling up the street before them. It was Three-Quarter Willim.

“Oh,” she says, at this, “the night is very raw, M’sieur! Will you not go back?”

He shook his head. “I care not: Madame is foolish about me!”

“But,” she said again, “see—that old man; he is a very sly old man; I’m afraid of him!”

The Fiddler laughed: “But then—what can he do?”

He persisted in passing Three - Quarter Willim, and only left her at the very door of the Inn, with a glance that was almost tender, and with an extra flourish of his Florentine hat, by way of defiance to all meddling old men.

## CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

### THREE-QUARTER WILLIM'S DELIVERANCE.

THREE-QUARTER WILLIM duly reached his destined corner by the fire in the back-room at the FIRST AND LAST, and sighed with satisfaction as he laid aside his stick, following the sigh by a grunt of unmistakable significance.

"What is it, Willim?" asked the Innkeeper.

"Is it—is it Jemmy's wife?" said the Verger. Mrs Jemmy had lately disappeared from her home, and from Jemmy (who was given to his cups), with a gentleman from Tyneside.

"Wey, Willim—get your glass filled, and your chorchworden gannin'!" said Mistor Fostor, with robustious cheerfulness. "I wad as soon heör Three-Quarter Willim as read the Keelman's gossup in the *Humbro' Mercury!*" he further remarked to the company. "Willim's fine at a morder! I never heörd a better than the morder of auld Mistress

Chorlton, as he telled it in that varry chair one night !”

“Yes,” said the Verger reflectively: “that was a varry pretty piece of newspaper. I can see it as plain as if it was in print in the *Mercury!*” He drew imaginary letters with his long pipe-stem in the air before him, and spelt them out deliberately, in the clerical sing-song he affected—

“TARRIBLE MORDER AT  
BLACKHEUGH!

“FLIGHT OF THE MORDERER!!

“DISCOVERY OF THE COAL-PICK  
WITH WHICH THE BLUIDY DEED  
WAS DONE!!!”

He took so long to spell this out, with a conscientious particularity, and a literalness defying all interruption, that Captain Ffoulkes, whose wits moved quicker than his company’s, said, half in an “aside,” ere the Verger had quite ended:

“That’s an old tale now. If Willim’s a walking newspaper, he has some news. Now, Willim!”

Three-Quarter Willim put his head slightly on one side, as he looked round at the speaker, and gravely pointed his pipe at him :

“ Cap’n, it consarns you ! ”

He said this in a way to suggest untold depths of revelation, preserved in the interior of his chronicler’s historical treasury.

“ Concerns me ? ”

“ Consarns you, Cap’n Fox ! ”

Captain Ffoulkes laughed, with the easy conscience of a man who felt his sins of omission and commission to be fairly and securely hidden.

“ Out with it, man ! I haven’t murdered anybody this long while ; and the last was a cannibal on St Joseph’s island,—yes indeed ! and his eye said as plain as need be, ‘ I ’ll have a cut off you, Captain, for me and my missus ! ’ ”

Three-Quarter Willim did not like this frivolity.

“ I once had a doughter mysel’,” he began, with an apparent inconsequence.

The Innkeeper, still with much unconcern, received an empty tumbler from the nearest customer, and proceeded to replenish it.

Meanwhile, a foolish young man, Willim’s own nephew, Tom, who had been imbibing so fast



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that he lost his proper respect for his elders, began to sing suddenly :

*“Ow, what’s yor news the day, Mr Mayor, Mr Mayor?  
And what’s yor news the day, Mistor Mayor?  
The folks of Carne, they say,  
Want to tak’ wor Quay away,  
And ye canna say them nay, Mistor Mayor!”*

“I once had a doughter mysel’, and I ken well what lassies are.” Three-Quarter Willim went on now, deliberately, being fairly started in his way. “Now, I waänt to ask you, Cap’n Ffoulkes, as twix’ man and man, if ye think yon Frenchy a fit charrakter for your doughter to be seen wi’ after dark in the Seagate?”

Here he paused, and took a judicial gulp from his tumbler.

“Frenchy—what Frenchy?”

“Why, whae but yon Fiddlor?”

“Oh, him! Why he’s no Frenchman, Willim!”

“If he is not a Frenchy, he is summat else wot he oughtn’t to be!”

“Good—varry good reas’ning!” here said Mistor Fostor, in support of this contention.

*“And Geordie Reed himsel’,  
Will send Mounseer to hell,  
And ye canna stop him well, Mistor Mayor!”*

sang again the irrepressible Tom, producing

another verse of the sanguinary ballad of the Men of Carne, and their valiant demeanour on the high seas.

“Frenchy or nigger, Jew or ’Gyptian!” pursued Willim, undeterred, “is yon Fiddlor fit company for the likes of any of hus,—much less for the bit lassie, whae we’ve aäl heard play the panner upstairs?”

The whole company shook its head.

“Why, Willim, what’s the matter wi’ the man?”

“Mattor, Cap’n, mattor! I’ll syune tell ye the mattor.”

“Fiddling’s no sin, if ye fiddle well!—if that’s what you’re after?”

“Let that pass, Cap’n. But I’ll put a quest’n to the comp’ny: Did ivor anyone of ye ivor so much as heör the black-a-vist rascal sae much as say a single wor-rd to anyone of ye? Now, that’s a funny thing!”

“Ay, ay!” said Mistor Fostor. “If the beggar’s a dummy, let him say sae like a man!”

The Innkeeper exploded:

“If the man’s dumb let him speak! Oh, Fostor, Fostor! What a bishop! And you full of my best Dieppe’ too!”

This produced a temporary lull in the general feeling against the subject of the discussion. Perceiving that he had lost ground somewhat, Three-Quarter Willim roused himself for a still more convincing line of argument. He spat out an imaginary straw from his lips, as a preliminary—

“P’ff—p’ff!”

He always did this when a great occasion arose, and his faculties needed to be at their best.

“I saw him on Sundie night, and I saw him again the night—in the Seagate—ay,” he added very solemnly, “walking with the Cap’n’s daughter,—”

“She is just come in!” said the Captain callously; “I hear the missus at her i’ the kitchen!”

Three-Quarter Willim ignored the interruption.

“And I said to myself, said I, ‘That face has seen you before, Willim Robson; or one varry like it.’ So, I casts about in my memory.” Here the old gentleman became much excited, laid down his pipe at the hearthside, and arose from his seat. So standing, he turned his back

to the fire; and he spat out three imaginary straws this time, as he faced the company,—

“P’ff—p’ff—p’ff.”

The pause had its effect. Everybody was in suspense to know what the recesses of so venerable and well-stocked a memory were about to unfold.

“It was my thord and last voyage to the East Indies,” said he, at length, measuring every word: “my thord and last. We sailed from the port o’ Leith. At the last few minutes, one of oor crew slipped oot of sight, and we shipped a lang lean dark man in’s place, to sarve aft. He said he was a Hielandman frae Kelso,—Thurso, I mean: but he was nae Scot, Hieland or Lowland!”

“What was he, Willim—a Welshman?” Captain Ffoulkes meant to be ironical; but the point failed of its effect.

“He was—he was——” here Willim lowered his voice mysteriously, and stooped a little, to give his continuation more oratorical force—“a dummy!”

“Howts, Willim,” said the Verger, forgetting his dignity, “aä thowt ye were commin’ oot wi’ a sperrit at the varry least o’t!”

"A dummy!" iterated the narrator, severely.

"I never heard tell of a dumb seaman, all my years at sea," said Captain Ffoulkes at this. "He warn't much good, Willim?"

"He was the divil up aloft!" said the other. "'Tis like a tom-cat he could straddle the cross-trees in the coorsest sea that runs! Our bos'n was a Cockney born; he says, one tarrible day when we had sent the dummy aloft, and the sea swallering itself, and the lightnin' curlin' like snakes in the topmast,—hopin' the beast would sing,—he says, as he keps his eye on him, 'Ee must have an invisibile tail,' he says!"

"Rather a curiosity—a sailor wi' a tail!" commented Willim's foolish nephew, with a giggle.

"Pigtails they did have, and not so long ago!" said the Captain. "But what come of the poor devil?"

"Well," continued the tale-teller, "the weather grew coorse and coarser on us, after that; and the crew set it doon aäl to the dummy; said he was Judas, the Flying Dutchman, or summat uncanny! Ye see, ma lads—they thowt he wouldn't could speak, tho' he kenned how! So I detormined to have him open his beggorin'

lips, at the end o't. One daäy, I called him up, and spoke him plain—'Ef ye dinnot and winnot speak, I'll rope-end ye, ye fause dummy 'at ye are!' But no! not a word! So I gave him rope's-end and wator for a week, and put the irons on him. But one mornin' when they went to look, beggor! he was gone! Ay, clear vamooosed! And fine weather we had aäl the rest on that v'yage."

"I hope the poor devil won't have it out with you in Kingdom-Come!" said the Innkeeper. "Seems to me, he has a case! But where does the Fiddler come in?"

"That's it," said Willim, with culminating emphasis—"That's it: the rascal was the varry moral on the Fiddlor!—the varry moral. And both dummies!" he added, with a final stroke, as he resumed his seat, "both dummies!"

"What does Holy Writ itself tell us?" queried the Verger, when this had duly saturated the imagination of the whole assemblage. "It's possessed wi' divils and an' evil sperrits, a'most aäl the dummies in it are!"

"I say nowt about the Beuk," said Willim, determined to have the completing touch, and to add the moral to his own tale: "but take

warnin' frae an auld friend, Cap'n; and dinnot let young Miss near that black man!"

The Captain laughed indulgently:

"Well, he can't come in to-night," he said; "for there's the clock striking eleven! 'Tis time we got to bed, especially old gentlemen of degree like Three-Quarter Willim."

The company thereupon dispersed, but each member of it carried home his own version of Three-Quarter Willim's little tale.

## CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

### MISTRESS FFOULKES SPEAKS.

IT was old Martinmas Day, and Mistress Ffoulkes was engaged in her cavernous kitchen, preparing for the Martinmas supper of the retired sea-captains and river pilots of Carne.

In spite of her infirmities, to which, indeed, she gave a certain robustious effect, her ministrations in the huge burnished apartment conveyed as convincing a picture of life, and of the activities that go to maintain it, as one could well desire.

Outside, the November gloom might seem to savour of mortality; but therein lay only an added glory for the Inn-kitchen, since it gave the enormous fire that burned and red-lit the place every opportunity of making its glow tell.

In its full blaze, but at a sufficient distance for comfort, Mistress Ffoulkes sat in a chair that



had been placed by the clean-scoured kitchen table, itself about an acre in extent.

Therefrom she directed operations, inspected the appearances and proportions of flour, seasoning, spices, and so forth; the trussing of a goose; the dismembering of a hare for a pie; and other such phenomena incidental to the preparing of a feast. Surrounded by such signs, Mistress Ffoulkes was well in her element, and in thorough good humour; and a handsome old lady she looked.

But now, O Kitchen-muse, sing the charms of Marged Ffoulkes, who stood at the remoter end of the table, the sleeves of her lilac print frock turned up above the elbows, her pretty arms kissed by insensible flour, her fingers caressing unfeeling flakes of pastry. Ah me; it is given to one to see such arms so appetisingly engaged only once in a life-time. For this is the age of drawing-rooms; and the Kitchen-muse is out of date. The sweet fragrance of baking bread; the noble odours of roasted meats before the fire; the promise of an open oven-door: these things Marged might, and did, find good; but she will probably be the poorer, in the standard of heroines, for my having said so.

In the very midst of these unheroic occupations, resounded a knock at the back-door that admitted the more intimate friends of the house, through a sort of mysterious catacombs, from the riverside.

It was young Andrer who entered, passing out of the shadow of the doorway into the red light of the fire. There he paused, in a half-bashful attitude that was picturesque enough, as his eye rested on Marged. Mrs Ffoulkes hailed him with great heartiness.

“Ay,” said the older woman, giving a nod of the head backwards towards the younger, “look at her! Makin’ a hare-pasty, she is, for the pilots’ supper. She is not sic a bad hussy, if she wad be content wi’ fillin’ other people’s mouths, in place o’ elways opening her own ower that panner!”

“She can do baith, it seems,” said young Andrer adroitly. “Auld sangs and hare-pasties, I like them baith varry well!”

“Nae doobt!” said Mistress Ffoulkes: “auld sangs like ‘Bonnie Bobby Shaftoe’ is fine; but this new-fangled way of screaming, now we go up, now we come down—the same as she is learning from them Tegners—that’s what I

canna abide. It's aäl that Fiddlor: he's sent the Cap'n crazy, like the rest o' them!"

"They say he can play, sae as to make your mouth run to hear!" said he at this. "An' him a dummy! He's a bit o' a myst'ry, Mistress Fox."

"Too myster'ous for me," she said drily. "Dummy or no, he seems to have plenty to say eftor dark i' the Seagate—hey, Marged—hey?"

The shaft took more effect than the old lady intended. The second "hey," in fact, was brutal. It was uttered with a sarcastic unctioin, and a harsh pitch of the voice, that made it insulting.

The girl did not trust herself to speak. She flushed a combative red; her eyes darted defiance, and two tears half-started in them. Ashamed of this, she vigorously swept the flour from her hands; turned, with one pretty abashed glance at young Andrer, and was gone.

Mistress Ffoulkes, her back being turned, heard the rustle, looked round and saw what had occurred.

"Eftor her, Andrer! eftor her!" said the wily old woman. "Ye'll can saäy ye dinnot

believe what they saäy about her and the Fiddlor!"

"Neither I do," said Andrer chivalrously, hurrying off in his turn.

He caught her in the long room upstairs, crouched on the old couch there, her head in her hands. Fortunately for her pursuer, he was still for her mainly her old playmate and schoolfellow. He knelt beside her there.

"Never mind what they say; I'll swear it's a lie either way," he consoled, with a sudden expansion of his usual moral code, for he was one of the most truthful of creatures.

"They are all against me, and that unlucky Fiddler," she cried, "and him not able to say a word for himself. Cruel! they are cruel, cruel, cruel!"

"Never mind," he said again, and put his arm round her neck in the sheerest schoolboy fashion. "You was always friends with me, wasn't ye, Marg'd?"

She turned, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him impulsively.

"Ye will be good to me, won't ye, Andrer;—and ye will stand up for them that's wronged, always?"

"Always," he said fervently. He kissed her in his turn, on her red lips, and that she did not object to.

But when he caught one of her arms, still shaded with the white dust of the flour, here and there in flakes and patches, and went on to kiss that too, she started up and threw him off with an alacrity that astonished him. For she had asked her question as of a *bon camarade*, an old play-fellow, a loyal friend; he had answered as a lover.

She sped out of this room too, still more disturbed than before, crying:

"O Andrer, I thought—I thought!"

He heard no more, as she vanished through the doorway, on the way to her own sanctum upstairs.

Whatever his errand was, he did not go back to the kitchen and Mistress Ffoulkes. He let himself out quietly by the side-door in the alley, and so went his way, with the foolish expression that an inexperienced lover is apt to wear at such first rebuffs. But the presence of Marged, as she stood in the red firelight, and then again, as she turned round in the arm-chair and kissed him; of Marged, her tearful eyes, so full of

vivid sable gleams, her lips so red, so poutingly indignant, and her soft, rounded, flour-dusted arms, seemed to rise up amid the familiar appearances of everything he looked at, and to be reflected in the water as he rowed back to Carne Quay. And he said more than once :

“Damn that Fiddler : he shan’t have her.” And once again he set his hopes fondly on the coming festival of St Andrew’s night.

He did not know that by this Marged was standing at her window, which commanded the ferry from on high, watching his boat.

Till now she had worn her hair down in long dark tresses, that hung prettily about her shoulders. But now, as she stood there, she was gathering them up experimentally, and twisting and coiling them vigorously around her head. The movements of her hands were abrupt, even angry ; but it was a kind of anger that in a maid is often half coy.

It showed the sudden consciousness of the woman in her, against which she rebelled, and which was called out by the state of war she had got into, as well as by love. What her gestures said, practically, was :

“Ah, if I were a man,—if I were a man!”

She had been struck by the weight of Andrer's arm, as she threw him off and fled from him. How good to be so strong, or, next best!—how good to have one so strong as a protector! She felt at once indignant with him, and yet strangely exhilarated, as she thought of his kiss. She was at once angry with him, and yet,—yet grateful to him for caring for her so fervently. She yearned for affection, and so little of it came to her share. She wished to have a lover, but such a lover as only a maiden imagines, all compact of fire and angelic, untainted chivalry. Something of a maiden's inexperience, and a good deal of a maiden's fierceness, was in all this.

Soon again her thoughts returned to Mistress Ffoulkes' quip about the Fiddler. And again, she wished she were—everything she was not! She wished she could go away,—to the southern lands the Fiddler spoke of. And then, as she saw a blunt and battered collier toiling slowly, with brown sails spread, down the river, she realised how inextricably her heart-strings were tied up in the familiar surroundings of the Inn and the waterside, the Seagate, Carne Quay,

and the rest. Her heart was there: her fancy craved to travel.

Her mind, in fact, was torn by cross emotions; and in trying to assort them, and wishing to be a man, she grew of a sudden, without quite knowing it, into a woman.



## CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

### CARNE HALL.

SHE did not return to the hare-pasty; but asserted her newly attained independence by crossing the ferry, and making her way through the purlieus of Carne Quay, to the seashore north of the harbour, a lonely stretch of sands backed by lonelier rolling sand-dunes. The gloom of the day suited her mood. She wandered on, humming moodily to herself snatches of old songs, and some of those newer melodies she had succeeded in remembering from hearing them on the fiddle. A few sea-birds swooped and dipped near her now and again; once, a black dog barked and ran out on to the sands from the sand-dunes, came towards her, then faltered, turned, and ran back again.

The dog's disappearance left the sombre seascape lonelier than before. At times the gloom gathered ahead of her in a dark cloud, that

rested on the sand, and seemed to have an almost human form, giant-like, threatening. But as she came nearer, these vague genii—for they really assumed an amorphous life of their own, expressing the spirit of the day as nothing else could—gradually disappeared, or retreated to the sand-dunes, or to the sea.

These glooms, these giants of the sea-waste, gathered number as she went; but she felt a pride at leaving home behind, and she pressed on. She must have walked some three miles along the beach, where, latterly, the only life was in some short abrupt wave which the still sea threw up at her feet, when, at length, she felt herself tired and hungry, and paused, looking around for some place to rest.

The sea-gloom had encircled her by this in a narrow ring of only some dozen yards in diameter. This ring, at the point where she paused, included some portions of an old sea-wall, almost covered up and obliterated by the drifting of the sand. Under this had been constructed a primitive bathing-box of canvas, in the soft sand; entering its low door, and sinking on a sandy plank that served as a seat, she immediately fell asleep.

Broken dreams came to her as she slept. She found herself walking in the midst of gaily dressed people upon a green lawn, with gardens around, and a palatial mansion beyond. She looked in vain for some familiar face among them, and so entered the house, and wandered through one stately room after another. In one, a table was spread with silver dishes, white napery, and flowers. Ah, how hungry she was! Just as she was uncovering a dish some one called out with a terrific shout, and she started up, confused at her surroundings. Thereupon she saw that a black dog, the same she had encountered earlier in her wanderings, had put his head in under the canvas flap that served as a door. As she sat up, he withdrew, gave one brief bark, and fled. Evidently it was another such bark that had disturbed her sleep.

Startled, chilled, and thrice uncomfortable, she found on emerging a slight breeze stirring, and saw that the gloom was dispersing. Her circle of sight was so far enlarged that she perceived, beyond the drifted and ruined masonry of the wall, dim shapes of trees and shrubs, evidently adorning some large terraced garden, the lowest terrace of which was half-covered up

with sand. A minute or two more, and some larger, more definite object showed distantly through the clearing fog. It was a mansion, built in pillared and porticoed magnificence, which gradually disclosed itself, standing back in solitary state and melancholy unexpectedness about a quarter of a mile from the seashore.

A palace out of place! A more stately and august design you shall hardly find among all the great houses of Inigo Jones, that master of his art, who designed it. A lofty pile served as its centre, with an array of columns—exquisitely set, divinely proportioned, and approached by three simultaneous flights of steps, fit to give a generous entrance to troops and battalions of guests. The immense portico easily received these steps, and opened palatial doors to them.

Opened?—it should rather be said, closed; for a closer view showed they had clearly not been opened for a long period, and that some other entrance must now be used by its inmates.

Evidently the central pile was hardly inhabited. On either hand, two less lofty wings were connected with it by long crescents of

severe masonry, again supported on pillars, and forming two classic cloisters. Each of these wings was spacious enough to hold, with space to spare, a large household.

The austere state of the whole building filled our one solitary spectator with wonder and sighing curiosity. She stood there in a breach of the sea wall, gazing at it in profound amaze; trying to construct for herself the life of the people who lived there; recalling fitfully some of the traditions and scandals that had leaked out of its ruinous magnificences.

Carne Hall was well known to every one in the Carne region; but to most people, as to her, it was only known in its landward aspect, as seen from the highway road running north from Carne Quay to Hartwick Sands, and skirting its demesne. It was new to her on this side.

She stood long; taking note of the long avenues of stunted, sea-warped elms stretching out of sight to north and south, and of the neglected gardens, originally intended to carry out and enhance the architectural design of the house itself. So looking, a sunk road, leading down to the seashore, not a hundred yards from where she stood, reminded her that her quickest

way home again was by the Hartwick highway beyond the park, and not by the sea. She began to feel an exquisite desire for familiar faces, houses, and men, something more human than the seascape and this cold, great house.

Making her way to the sunk road, she found, on adventuring up it, that the cutting was more than half-filled with sand. At one point, when she had passed under a graceful bridge, and come nearly in a line with the outposts of the right wing of the house, the side of the road had fallen in; and this, together with the blockaded sand, brought her head above the level of the surrounding gardens.

As she surmounted this *débris*, and paused to inspect the surroundings in all their superfluity of desolate splendour, her ear caught a sound of approaching wheels on the gravel before the Hall. She would have been something less than the girl she was if she had not delayed to see what arrival this might be at the deserted house.

Aggravatingly enough, just as the head of a grey pony appeared, the soft sand began to sink beneath her feet. She had only time to catch one sure glimpse of the low chaise behind, ere the whole scene was lost to her, as she sank out

of range. But that one glimpse showed her in the chaise a solitary young man, with long dark hair beneath his hat, brushing the cloak about his shoulders; and with a vivid patch of green, the green baize of a bag, showing brightly against its black folds.

## CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

LADY HENRIETTA.

“ I care not for these Ladies,  
That must be wooed and prayed :  
Give me kind Amaryllis,  
The wanton country maid ! ”

CAMPION.

WHILE Marged, feeling unaccountably disturbed at what she had seen, was wearily resuming her way up the sunk lane to the high road from Hartwick to Carne Quay, the Fiddler was lifting his long legs out of the pony chaise, under the scrutiny of three pairs of eyes.

One pair, and the most important, were the pale blue eyes of Lady Henrietta, Lord Carne's eldest daughter, who gave a hasty glance to see that the visitor she expected had arrived, and then fled as fast as her slight lameness permitted.

The second pair, of a deeper blue, belonged to Lady Philippa, a complacent young person of nineteen, without any of her sister's superfluous sentiment. She stood at a window of a deserted chamber in the central pile, and her glance grew scornful as she gazed.



The youngest of the three girls, Hilda, had more boldly gone to the very side-door by which the chaise was standing and calmly scrutinised the Fiddler through the side-windows of red glass, which gave him a decidedly Mephistophelean effect and agreeably impressed the young lady.

“I thought it was the Devil come to take Mamma away!” she observed to Philippa afterwards, alluding to a favourite threat of my Lord’s, which his children, too, had learnt to use to their mother.

Poor Mamma herself was also at a window in one of the empty upper chambers of the central pile, as the Fiddler might have perceived had he been more ready to take cognisance of things other than his own emotions. But she did not see him for her part, either. She was busily engaged in her one absorbing pastime of catching flies with a large silk handkerchief on the windows of this part of the Hall, which, for some unascertained reason, were infested with these creatures. But, unlike other kinds of game, November saw the supply begin to give out; and the poor lady was sore put to it to find sufficient sport. In proportion to its difficulty,

she became more absorbed in its pursuit, in spite of the hindrances which her family sought to interpose.

Even now, while the Fiddler was being escorted through the long corridors of the left wing to a faded drawing-room, hung with blue satin, and much decorated in pale azure and gold, she was interrupted by Philippa, who entered the lofty apartment, from one of whose window-seats the fly-hunting was being conducted.

“Dear Mamma!” said the young lady, in a clear and slightly sarcastic tone, looking not at her mother, but at the handle of the door, which had given her some trouble to get it open, “dear Mamma—don’t you know that a distinguished visitor has arrived, on Henrietta’s invitation; and he has, very kindly, brought a fiddle with him? You ought to be in the drawing-room to receive him. It isn’t at all proper for Henrietta to be there all alone. Come, dear Mamma! I can’t wait!”

Lady Carne looked round. She had an oddly devised head-dress surmounting her plentiful yellow hair, and this had been pushed out of place in the eagerness of her pursuit, which much enhanced the oddity of her expression.

Moreover, one of her eyes had, at some distant time, been injured, and had no light or sight in its discoloured orb. This came of one of Lord Carne's little pleasantries, indulged in very early in their married life: one of the series which his wit had prompted, and which his wife's wits had suffered by. And yet, as one looked at her, one saw what a comely and attractive girl she once had been, and noted the impress of an inherited grace still lingering in her lustreless features.

But, as she turned towards her daughter, from her post on the window-seat, with the yellow silk handkerchief, constituting her sporting gear, in one hand, and looked helplessly at the floor as if inanimate things were apt to become animate, her whole hopeless, fantastical incompetency might have struck any one with pity.

"Where's Rupert?" she said, in a disconsolate voice.

There was small pity in Philippa's tones, as she looked up calmly at the absurd figure poised there, iterating for all reply to the question:

"Come—come! really, I can't wait."

The tone was too peremptory to be withstood. The young lady evidently had a will of her own.

Her mother, after two separate attempts at different corners of the window-seat, succeeded in alighting safely on the floor of the room. She went towards the door, with one last regretful look back at the window-panes on which a large fly was buzzing.

Five minutes later, and as the Fiddler and Lady Henrietta were overcoming the preliminaries of a musical acquaintanceship, difficult enough under the circumstances, the drawing-room door was unceremoniously pushed open. The Fiddler, who was extricating his fiddle from the green bag, looked up uneasily. Henrietta made a gesture of nervous irritation.

"There!" said a clear mischievous voice without, as Lady Carne, assisted by a directive push on her shoulder, stumbled vacantly into the room, and then stood, looking round her. When, however, she had apprehended the newcomer, she advanced toward him, with a certain dignity, and inclined her head with a graceful courtesy.

"You must pray excuse me!" she said, and her voice had a melancholy echo in it of great occasions; "I am suffering from a recent severe loss!"

"Why, Mamma," said Henrietta, "what is this? what *do* you mean?"

"I have lost my son Rupert!" she said as she turned again towards the door, and so made her exit, while a ripple of schoolgirlish laughter sounded in the corridor.

Henrietta shut the door with emphasis after the departing lady, and slipped the catch as a security against further interruptions.

"Chère pauvre Maman!" she said. "Il faut, M'sieur, que vous pardonnez une si drôle scène. Mon Dieu, qu'il fait sombre ce soir: tiens! je vais égayer un peu les choses!"

She laughed with an eager, excited little laugh, as she went to the fire, lit a wax taper, and proceeded to the grand piano (one, it may be added, of M. Tegner's shipwrecked cargo).

Producing a sonata for violin and piano, and seating herself, she had not struck a dozen chords ere the Fiddler perceived she was an accomplished musician.

"You see," she said to him presently, out of a running accompaniment, while there came a pause for the violin, "I wanted someone to practise with."

For an hour the blue hangings trembled at

his music, the gilt naiads on the panels grew pale to hear, and the grand piano felt itself thrilled by a new emotion.

As for the pianist, who was still more emotional, the hectic flush on her cheeks grew into a spot like blood, as they ended their last duet, and a knock came on the door.

The maid who had ushered the Fiddler in on his arrival, appeared there, in accordance with some order not given by Henrietta, it would seem—

“The shay is ready, my leddy!”

Something that sounded almost profane escaped the young lady’s lips. The Fiddler, who had a curious despatch in such things, was already putting up his fiddle and preparing to go.

She was about to ask him to stay a while longer; then she reflected, and said, in French—

“When will you come again?”

The Fiddler was perplexed. He began a polite, but rather unintelligible series of explanations, ending with “Vendredi?”

“Friday?” she said. “Well, yes! Friday then!”

She rang for the maid. When the Fiddler

had got into the chaise for his return home, he thought he saw, as he drove off, a pale face indistinctly showing at a window immediately above him. It was Henrietta, who was gazing sentimentally after him.

“Poor fellow!” she said, “what a romantic face!”

The face haunted her, indeed, for some time to come.

But his day's adventures were not yet over. About a mile and a-half outside Carne Quay, a small blacksmith's forge used to stand, posted at the parting of two roads, seaward and landward, so that its light shone far along the former way in the deepening dusk.

As the chaise jogged up, the Fiddler thought he recognised a familiar figure against this red light, seen in black relief. It was Marged, dragging weary feet homeward. She looked round as the chaise overtook her, and recognised the Fiddler, who, touching the driver's shoulder, caused the vehicle to stop. He jumped out, bowing, and pointed with an expressive gloved hand to the chaise.

She was about to decline the offer, when the blacksmith, probably thinking that the stopping

chaise meant something amiss, came to his forge door. Since, then, she was already seen in conference with the Fiddler, what did it matter?

Moreover, there was always her independent spirit, telling her to take her own way. So after a moment's doubt, she jumped into the chaise.

"But where is Mamzelle go this afternoon?" asked the Fiddler, as they rode down toward the dark town, and he drew a rug closer over her knees.

"Walking by the sea!" she said, not too graciously; but she was tired and dispirited, poor child, and rather resented his having been to the Hall.

He could hardly have guessed this feeling; but he said next, more abstractedly (he was always ready to become abstracted):

"I have been giving a music-lesson at Carne Hall—to M'lle Henriette!"

"Lady Henrietta!" she corrected, perversely enough; "she is proud; she *would* be angry if you called her that!"

"She is ver' nice, I think," he said, half to himself—" *très gracieuse!*"

Marged said no more. Without any suffi-



cient reason, she felt jealous of his having made the acquaintance of this lady, proud or gracious, who would, no doubt, monopolise him henceforth.

When they dismounted at the landing-stage, and were passing down to the ferry-boat under the gleam of the flickering oil-lamp, a young man who was crossing from a neighbouring slip, a pair of oars on his shoulder, started, and let an oar drop. It was Andrer.

He went on with downcast head and averted eyes, she noticed; feeling uneasy and yet a little pleased that he should see her with the Fiddler. But there was trouble already in his face, long ere he had seen her. The end of a dark day, indeed, for the house of Foster; and the lot and portion of that house were to count differently to young Andrer from this time forth.

As the Fiddler bade Marged good-night in the alley by the "First and Last," he said—

"I hope Mamzelle is sing,—sing all the time. Madame, she think you have good,—ver' good voice!" A wave of girlish ambition surged through her, and it was not allayed by his saying, mischievously, as he shifted his

green bag, the better to shake her hand, the first time he had done so: "Also M'lle—I mean—Lady Henriette, is a good pianiste!"

"I don't like that Lady Henrietta!" said Marged to herself, as she took off her hat and cloak upstairs, and prepared her tired nerves to meet Mistress Ffoulkes.

## CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

### THE AFFLICTION OF MISTOR FOSTOR.

“ Poor thing she is sae sairly  
She canna live till morn ! ”  
*Kirsty's Complaint.*

THE night before, Mistor Fostor had been awakened by his wife, after something like an hour's sleep. He had a regular formula for such occasions.

“ You always was a heartless woman ;—wakin' a man after he has wrought hard aäl daäy.”

He grumbled it over, first to himself, then more loudly, so as to make it reach her ear, and with emphasis ; but for once it took no effect. The groans increased momentarily, so that even his sound slumbers were hopelessly discounted.

He sat up at last, lit a candle on the chair at his bedside, looked hazily round the room ; and then, with a profound yawn, turned to his wife, as a still thicker rope of groans untwisted itself in her frail throat.

“Goodsakes!” he said, as he watched her, “her insides must be varry tough to stand such a rivin’!”

Thereafter, getting more used to the noise, and to the near impact of another person’s agony, he procured his pipe, which lay ready to his hand, and filled and lit it. He smoked it to a running accompaniment of such mortal sighs and groans, casting a calm and reflective glance now at the sufferer, now at the near circuit of the bed-chamber.

The room was a low, confined, raftered one, in which the huge four-poster took up a main part of the small space, leaving only a narrow lane on one side, and all but touching the ceiling with its blue and white chintz curtains. Out of these Mister Fostor loomed like Jupiter from a cloud, supreme deity of the place.

A chimney-piece adorned with china dogs, and a heavy chest of mahogany drawers crowded with similar bric-a-brac, mostly canine, were the two other chief features in the room. To the chest of drawers, in particular, his eyes turned more often than to other objects. When his pipe was finished, the groans still continuing, he dismounted heavily on to the floor. One more

glance, to make sure that his wife was still sunk in her own sufferings, and he had reached the chest of drawers and gently opened the topmost one. The drawer was filled with the poor woman's best caps and other fal-lals ; but after some careful groping in one corner, Mistor Fostor drew forth a small black velvet bag, from which he extracted with a surprising deftness a key. Kneeling down before the chest, he opened the deep bottom drawer of the chest with this key, and took therefrom a sealed blue-paper packet. His expression, as his finger's closed upon it, was a miracle of subtlety for so stolid a being ; but when he rose again to his feet, and looked round, another expression, still more surprising, suddenly demoralised his heavy features.

From the dim enclosure of the bed-curtains, a face, like a death's-head, the skin strained tight over the bony structure, the face of his wife, was looking out at him. She had raised herself slightly to see ; and when she had seen, she fell back ; but she said no word, perhaps because she was too exhausted. However, the mere effect of her face rising thus in witness against him, was enough. He put back the packet, locked

the drawer, replaced the key, and returned to the bedside.

But his demeanour now was quite different to what it had been, and when he spoke to his wife his voice was soft, and sounded even kind :

“ Div ye want anything, Mary ? ”

The woman shook her head.

“ Shall I dout the light ? ” he asked again, with lips pursed in readiness above the candle.

She nodded. It seemed his doings had revived her. But in the morning she failed to get up, and spoke of the doctor. Many hours elapsed before the doctor, who, like Mistor Foster, was given to his cups, and to pause at the “ First and Last ” on his way, was sober enough to arrive. By this it was evening.

“ I’ faith, Foster,” he said, “ I’ll send her a draught to ease the pain ; but she’s going this time. She may last the week out ! But, you know, you’re no nurse for her ! ”

Young Andrer escorted him afterwards back to the ferry : he had overheard his speech to Mistor Foster.

“ Is there nae chance for her, doctor ? ”

“ Not a bit ! she’ll hardly see another Sunday ! Get some woman in. Hold on

there!" For the ferry-boat was going. It was as Andrer was turning back that he saw Marged alight from the chaise.

The lad, for he was no more, found a neighbour to come in; but he haunted her bedside, and stole in and out, in stockinged feet, bringing useless cups of tea and milk and brandy. His mother showed no sign of recognising these offices until the late afternoon, as the November dusk was already settling down. Then Mrs Waite, the attendant neighbour, had disappeared to drink tea with a friendly caller, and discuss sick-room reminiscences. The sick woman, in her absence, cried out:

"Tom! Tom!" She was very fond of her masterful husband, in spite of everything, and adored his bulk, and masculine deep bass of authority.

"Ow, 'tis only thou, Andrer!" She put out her hand, and the lad took it.

"It is easior with me now," she said; "but I ken I canna be for varry long—an hoor or two, mebbe!"

The lad could not find words to speak.

"Look ye, ma little Dan;—'at's what we used to call ye! But I've forgot! ye're none

sae little now! But ye'll never be sae big as Foster. He's what they call a fine man!"

Andrer bowed his head. He, too, admired his father beyond words.

"Never!" pursued the sick woman. "But as I'm going, 'tis time ye were thinking of gettin' merried soon, Andrer! That missie of Fox's is a nice lass; and she'll have a bit too, they say! Ask her the first chance. Dinnot let her be. Lassies like to be well set upon! They dinnot like the hanging-back lads!"

This exhausted her. She had turned on her side; now she sank in the bed, and lay panting on her back. The terrible groans recommenced. She withdrew her hand, and clenched it in her pain.

The agony went on for what seemed to her son an eternity.

"O God, O God!" he kept saying to himself, shutting the tears resolutely into his eyes, and gripping his knees together.

Presently the dying woman came to a little. She cast a piteous glance at him, to see if he was still there.

"Hinnies how!" she said; "I thowt I was



gone that time! Dinnot greet, Andrer. I'll soon be through with it!"

Thereafter she found voice to add :

"If ye marry yon lassie o' Fox's, ye'll keep an eye on her! There's a sly twist o' mischief sittin' in the corner of her mouth, I'm thinkin'. She might be carryin' on if ye was away frae the hoose for lang, look ye!"

Here a sharper pang quickened her thoughts, and suggested perhaps other reflections.

"But oh, Andrer," she said, with a last effort, "if she has bairns ye'll be kind to the poor lass—specialies when they're on the road! Yor father wasna varry kind to me,—a heavy hand and a lang airm! Ah, he was a fine man, Andrer! Ye'll never be sic—an ane! Never! But what on a fancy is this in my poor heid?"

She gasped out these last words with difficulty. Another sentence she began, but so faintly, that he had to rise and lean close over her: it took long ere she could collect her forces sufficiently to speak again; then she began :

"Fostor is not i' the hoose, is he? I have that to tell ye, Andrer, it's best he sannot

hear!" With this, she began a broken narration of her experiences at Carne Hall, when she was a maid to my Lady there.

"Ay," she said, "his Lordship took a fancy to me; he was varry kind to me, varry kind!—That's why ye have his name—Andrer's his name, and ye were called aftor him; for 'tis him, not Fostor, is your father! The three bairns I had tae Fostor all died! He give Fostor a hun'red poun' to marry me aftor; and another hun'red to me to keep for ye against when ye should come to need it. An' if ye will luik where I'll tell ye, ye'll find the packet in they drawers yonder!"

Thereupon, she gave him instructions how to find the packet, and insisted he should take it now, at once:

"Fostor's a shifty man, times; and ye couldna saäy what he might be aftor!"

The effort to say so much had quite spent her strength. She fell back, as he was groping, dumfounded, in the drawer for the packet. He held it up at length for her to see, but she was past noticing anything. He went back, and knelt by her, as she was trying to mutter, apparently, some last message.

“If—she—has—bairns!” that was all.

As he bent closer, he knew the mortal seal upon her face, by instinct; and the rattle of the breath as it left the body which rejected the familiar guest.

Mistor Fostor had retired earlier in the day, finding the house uncomfortable, to a den that he had had constructed in a corner of the boat-shed. It had been made by simply boarding up a corner of the shed, so as to form a triangular retreat, with a small window to light it, and a large door to give access from without. An old fire-stove, taken out of a dismantled schooner, served to heat it. A desk, and a strong oak seat, with some stained charts, compasses, and an old weather-glass, on the walls, completed the garniture of the place. He called the place his office; but from the fact that the ink in the bottle was dry, and the solitary quill split, and that the atmosphere, when the stove was active, was apoplectic, it may be inferred that his clerical, like his nautical avocations, were in an agreeably chronic state of abeyance.

Here it was Andrer went to tell him the

fatal news. Mistor Fostor roused himself from an apoplectic dose, and emerged rubbing his eyes.

"Well, well!" he said, "so the auld woman is gone! Did she send me a good-bye?"

Andrer scanned him narrowly, and answering, his voice broke with what might be half a sob, half a bitter laugh.

"Na; but she said ye were a fine man to look at!"

"Humph! she wasna sic a fule after all! Come, lad, and we'll have a dram o' Scots to keep wor hearts up in this sad 'flickshun is come upon us!" And he led the way to the house.

But Andrer did not follow; but went up into the boat-loft, and sat there on a heap of sails in the dark. Presently Mistor Fostor came to the foot of the steps, with a lantern, and called him. He went down, reluctantly; and they turned into the lower floor of the boat-house.

"Did your mother say onything about your bit portion?" asked Mistor Fostor.

"I have it here, in my pouch! if that's what you mean!" said Andrer.

“Humph; she might have kinsult’ me about ye! Anything else?”

“Said she would have me marry soon!”

“Ye’d better look after the lass, then. Three-Quarter Willim seen her walkin’ aftor dark in the Seagate wi’ yon Fiddlor!” so saying, he turned away.

“A liar, a da——!” Andrer was beginning, when he thought of the dead face within, and all that it had kept to tell him at the last. This was only another stroke, small by comparison. All the world would soon know what he was, and what a stained name he carried. What could Marged care for him when she once knew.

Still, still—ah, that Fiddler! It was untrue. That he should walk with her; and it be talked about by any ale-worm over his cups. It was a lie.

Alack, within half-an-hour he saw her cross the dark ferry landing with the very man!

As for Marged, let us add that when she heard of Mistress Foster’s death, she was filled with the awe that such news brings to youthful fancy. Every time she looked over the

river at the red-tiled roof of the Foster house at Carne Quay, she was filled with an overwhelming sorrow for Andrer, and an almost morbid fear of death. Next day, Mistress Ffoulkes told her the rumour, which was already finding its way busily about, of Andrer's being misbegotten.

"Ye'll have to find another mate!" she concluded.

But now that he was in misfortune, Marged felt her love declare hotly for him; and she vowed to take the first chance of telling him she would marry him.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

### ON ST ANDREW'S NIGHT.

“’Tis time, gudewife, ye did the candles light :  
Till we foot the floor a’ St Andrew’s night !”  
*Old Song.*

ST ANDREW was the patron saint of Carne Hall. To his memory the half-ruined chapel in its grounds, long disused, was dedicated; and every year, according to time-honoured custom, a tenants’ supper, followed by country dances, was held at the Hall on the last day of November, which is, in the Church calendar, devoted to St Andrew. It was to this festival that Andrer Fostor had invited Marged; but his mother’s death broke that project.

When Carne heard that the Fiddler had been to Carne Hall, under the circumstances which we have seen, it said—

“Then Willie Westoe may stay at hame on St Andrew’s night!”

Willie Westoe of Hartwick was the accredited

musician on that occasion. He could fiddle dance tunes like the "Keel Row" against anyone; and he had this singular merit, that he fiddled the better the drunker he got. Like all true artists, moreover, he was privileged; and had grown tyrannous through long and unquestioned priority. He laughed at the mere idea of a rival.

"I'll fiddle the beggor for a guinea any daäy; for a guinea, I will!"

The night of St Andrew's came, draughty, dark, cold, and mischievous, with occasional wild splutterings of rain, so that the oil-lamps at the gates of the Hall, and the lanterns along the gravelled drive, and the lights under the gusty colonnade, were blown about uncomfortably, and threatened momentarily to go out. As for the great doors of the Hall, they showed an awkward tendency to throw themselves wide to the night at one moment; at the next, they would violently fling themselves to, just when some party of guests was entering, so as to cut off the tail—usually consisting of young men with stout faces, red hands, and hesitating dispositions.

These additions to his usual duties severely



strained the temper—already taut—of the gray-haired factotum, Abel, who was acting as porter and doorkeeper to-night.

“Come in, come awaäy in, ye greet styeg (gander)!” he said rudely to one halting young yeoman of a Herculean frame and a mouse-like hesitancy. “Come in, or stay oot. We can get on varry well without ye!”

No one, luckily, thought of taking offence at the old man, whose humour was well known.

“Good save’s! what a night!” he said, when some of our old acquaintances arrived. “I never thought to see ye here, Cap’n Fox, and Miss Fox with ye. It would hae become ye, I wad hae thought, to keep sic slim young missies at hame on sic a night.—That last beer ye sent us is not fit, it isn’t!”

Mistor Fostor had ridden up in the same trap with the Innkeeper and his daughter, not being able to resist the occasion, in spite of his recent bereavement. He tried to slink in unobserved amid the throng; but his bulk betrayed him. In this instance Abel surpassed himself.

“Hey, I see ye there, Fostor. Oh, what a canny man. Haäd away in. Ye’ll find plenty

to pick from, if that's what ye're after. There's nothing like an eörly start!"

This was a sarcastic suggestion that Mistor Foster was already in quest of a successor to the late Mistress Foster, and that materials for a choice were not wanting. He only raised a deprecatory left hand in reply, and hurried out of range as fast as possible.

Inside the festive chamber matters were equally disconcerting. The lofty doors opened without any intervening lobby into the hall, which extended its really magnificent proportions, between pillared walls, with two galleries overlooking at different heights, the full depth and height of the central pile. Since the date of the fire that had come near to destroying the place half-a-century ago, the wind and rain had had time to study out the weak points in the roof and elsewhere, and to take advantage of them. The pigeons, too, had made the same use of their opportunities, and found their way in. To-night, disturbed by the wind above, and the lights and unusual hubbub below, they flew at intervals across the upper darkness like uneasy spirits. And other sounds, still more disconcerting in their effect, were heard now and again from the

region of the roof, that kept up a continual uneasy clamour; sounds like the raising and shutting again of heavy trap-doors, accompanied by a creaking of beams and rafters, and by a moaning without of trees that threatened to grow human under stress of the elements.

Now, Carne Hall, and particularly this central deserted part of it, had an uncanny enough reputation. There was the tradition, to begin with, that the direct heir to the place always died ere he succeeded; and, a hundred years ago, the young heir of that day fell, or threw himself, from the lofty gallery above this festal hall, and was picked up dead. My Lady's afflicted wits, too, did not add to the reputation of the house. As the company assembled, and the rows of candles flickered and wavered on the long lines of the supper tables, and the murky and lofty vault of the roof-tree above was filled with dark noises, the greetings that passed had a distinct flavour of the gruesome.

"Is't true whaät they say, that her Leddyship has a greet pair o' hobbles on her feet, to keep her frae rinnin' awaäy frae the house?"

"I s'ouldn't wonder! Ugh, hinnies, I'm glad

it's Willie Westoe, and not that Fiddlor frae Carne, that's playin' the night!"

Willie Westoe was standing up on the little daïs reserved for the musicians, and looking at the preparations made for his comfort ; two tall candles, to wit, and one huge tankard of ale, laced with rum, called "Pit-punch." The same beverage, supplied in a hogshead for the occasion, from the cellars of the "First and Last," coursed in a generous flood along the tables, and mountains of cold meat, pasties, and other valiant comestibles, barricaded the company against the discomforts of the night, and the draughts that played coldly about the place.

At a side table, beneath a row of the marble columns carried up at either side of the hall, Captain Ffoulkes presided over a maritime contingent of guests from Carne ; and Marged sat by him, feeling desolate in Andrer's absence, and silently collected half-childish, half-superstitious impressions of this august, unhomely interior of the mansion, whose seaward aspect had so affected her fancy. To be taken to St Andrew's supper at Carne Hall for the first time was an event in the life of a girl. It meant that hence-

forth she was to have the privileges of a marriageable maid.

Andrer would have been an ideal companion to induct her into the mysteries of the dancing floor, after supper, had not his mother's death intervened. Mistor Fostor, as we have seen, was unable to resist the occasion; dressed in decent widower's black broadcloth, looking grave when humour was to the fore, and taking a quiet seat where he could eat and drink silently, he contrived to enjoy himself without being much noticed. Once in a while he cast a placid glance at Marged Ffoulkes, a pretty figure among the seamen and robust hoydens, in her black and lilac frock; whose subdued colours were meant as a delicate token of the relations betwixt the Fostor and Ffoulkes houses, and of the bereavement that had befallen the former.

Supper over, and the toasts of Lord Carne and his family being proposed, the three girls, as representing the family in my Lord's absence, came to the front of the lower gallery overhanging the hall, and bowed their acknowledgments. The clearing of the tables thereafter raised the ancient dust of the place, so that the candles blinked in a gusty cloud. But at the first

squeak of Willie Westoe's fiddle, the disorder ended, or rather re-shaped itself into the more orderly disorder of the opening dance, which was always danced to the tune of the "Keel Row."

The apparition of the three young ladies in the lower gallery interested Marged so much, that her eyes were still vainly climbing up there when a partner claimed her hand.

As the night wore on, and Willie Westoe's fiddle grew warm, and the dancers' feet red-hot, the storm without increased to a pitch that was finely proportionate. Gust after gust shook the walls till the windows rattled again; and the moans and wailings of the wind in the roof-tree had become first like the howls and shrieks of an endless multitude of demons of the air, and then like the trampling of waves, and the tearing of giant hands.

Those whose lot it was to sit coldly by and watch the dancing, grew alarmed early at these noises, and listened with increasing fear and trembling. Willie Westoe himself found it hard to make his music heard, and repaired so frequently to the tankard of Pit-punch that his fiddle overran its time, and more than once

squeaked a discord. Then the dancers lost their footing, and exclaimed upon him :

“Time, Willie, time!”

It became the refrain on all sides. This, to a man of Willie's temper, was not to be tolerated. He stopped to protest; he stood up so unsteadily that he fell against the table supplying his lights and refreshment, tipped it over, and himself sank by it, as if pulled down by some invisible hand; while from his fiddle came a scream—the anguish of catgut, the snap of strings.

The dancers went on for a turn; then paused in mid-floor. During this pause the storm fortified itself, and swept upon the Hall with all its terrors thrice increased. Immediately after the fiddle had cried out, there sounded, as it were, an ironic echo from above, the crash apparently of breaking glass; and this was the beginning of a series of tremendous buffets that the wind dealt roof and walls. To Marged, standing there, on her partner's arm, it seemed that Willie's overthrow was a consequence, in some sort, of this assault. At any rate, it was clear he would fiddle no more to-night, and dismay seized the dancers one and all.

The storm went on, visibly gathering fury. It seemed to come in bounds and leaps, and to throw itself upon the seaward front of the house, hallooing like some gigantesque huntsman calling on his hounds. At the height of this madness, there came a blast like the end of all things, threw the doors wide asunder, and swept into the hall with a fury that made the girls scream and bend their heads, while half the candles were blown out, and the rest shivered with only a last blue half-inch of flame upon their wicks.

When the frightened dancers, and the bystanders, had a little recovered, as the blast abated for a breathing space, and the unextinguished lights revived uncertainly, they saw that a tall dark figure, Willie Westoe's predestined rival, cloaked and hatted, his green bag under his arm, stood facing them in the dark space betwixt the open doors.

Lest this sudden entrance should seem too strange, let it be told how simply it came about. The Fiddler had been asked by Lady Henrietta to stay on for the evening's entertainment, after one of their usual weekly lessons of that afternoon. He made thus one of the house party in



the gallery upstairs, where he sat uncomfortably enough and dreadfully bored, behind Lady Henrietta. On the collapse of Willie Westoe, Philippa, who sat in the front of the gallery, looking down at the scene below, said :

“Why doesn't M'sieur go and fiddle to the poor things down there?” she added, in an aside to Hilda,—“where his proper place is!”

The Fiddler was only too delighted to take advantage of the diversion, and Henrietta acquiescing, he rose to go. But she followed him to the top of the staircase :

“Your fiddle is in the drawing-room! Perhaps you had better go round by the quad, and enter by the front doors!” she indicated them with a waved hand ; “else the people might think it strange, you see! Take hat and cloak, because of the storm outside!”

Only the first clause of these directions were audible even to Philippa's sharp ears. The rest was spoken softly, almost tenderly ; though it showed a concern, it may seem, rather for the proprieties, than for his comfort.

This as it may be, the Fiddler duly made his entry, and, after a moment's consternation, during which Abel chuckled audibly with

delight, Captain Ffoulkes stepped forward, and the dancing couples, seeing a possibility of a new supply of music, took heart of grace to abet his petition. Marged, on the arm of Jack Heugh, a shy but stalwart young yeoman of Hartwick, who had pursued her in vain all the evening until this dance, eagerly urged him forward.

“He can make his fiddle all but talk!” she whispered.

“Nae doubt,” said Jack, with a sagacious smirk; “but can he play a jig? Can he play the ‘Keel Row,’ and ‘The Three Tykes’?”

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

### “THE THREE TYKES.”

“ I canna stand they tunes frae France,  
The ladies likes ;  
I 'd have them play up fit to dance,  
' The Three fond Tykes ' ! ”

AFTER some preliminary skirmishes, some tunings up, and some strident harmonics, the Fiddler, sitting in the seat of Willie Westoe, struck at length into a lively tune that might be a Polish jig. But, though they admitted its “go,” the dancers failed altogether to master its movement and its erratic rhythm.

“ ‘The Three Tykes’ ! ” then called out some bolder spirits. “ Tell him to gie us ‘The Three Tykes’ ! ”

The Fiddler was willing to play anything. He had none of Willie’s professional jealousy. But, alack ! he knew not “The Three Tykes.”

“ Whistle it to him, Jemmy ! ” someone suggested.

Jemmy, nothing loth, stepped forward to the

foot of the musical dais, on which, behind the two tall fluttering candles, sat the Fiddler. Jem was a lively youth, of some forty-five summers—a bachelor, fond of dancing and the maidens it enabled him to seize by the waist. He had a clean shaven face, and rosy gills; and looked about twenty. When he whistled, his whole face, even his eyebrows, moved in concert with his lips; and one eyebrow had a trick of raising itself at intervals for the space of a few bars, that was very interesting to the simple-minded observer.

Now, "The Three Tykes," as everyone knows, is one of the liveliest of airs; and Jemmy's ardour was according. He became so absorbed in it, that even his elbows and shoulders shrugged themselves in sympathy; and when, after only a few bars, the unmistakable divine wail of the catgut joined itself to his brisk whistle, showing that the Fiddler had caught the tune, Jemmy held his breath to listen, but his arms still moved in an involuntary accompaniment. Soon the spirit of it—for the Fiddler played with a most convincing rhythm, seized Jemmy still more irresistibly. He had bent forward at first, in his eagerness to test

the correctness of the Fiddler's bowing ; and so standing, his head slightly on one side, his lips pursed, his arms going, he made an excellent index to the music, which even a deaf man could have understood. But now, his left foot began to tap in unwitting time to the music, and ere many more bars had passed, his other foot had followed suit ; from this the transition to the full step of the jig was a matter of course. It did not take a second for the dancers at large, who all had their eyes on him, to take his cue. Before the Fiddler had been fiddling five minutes, every foot was going—the whole floor danced.

As he went on, the Fiddler slightly quickened the time of his playing, so that the dance went fast and faster ; and the pace soon told upon the weaker maids, who dropped out with their partners—usually in the near neighbourhood of the table, whereon tankards of Pit-punch stood in tempting array. This masterful beverage enabled the spell of the fiddle, after a very few moments' pause, to re-assert itself. And when "The Three Tykes" had played their part, the Fiddler very adroitly shifted to the tune of

an old Border jig, a very pretty exchange which, by its novelty, added a new impulse to flagging feet, and a new backward fling of the heel to the ordinary triple step of the jig.

By this, the night was growing late; but the Pit-punch was so persuasive in the case of the gentlemen, and they were so urgent upon the ladies, and the fiddle was so irresistible, that the company showed no sign of breaking up. After a brief pause, the Fiddler, instructed afresh by the melodious Jemmy, struck up the famous tune of "Rowan Berries," which is more rapid than "The Three Tykes." The Fiddler had an artful way, moreover, of introducing sly little runs and variations into the main plain theme that was very taking.

"A few rounds more!" each gentleman whispered, as his partner cried off, "just to see how this pairt gans!"

Once the Fiddler's eye caught Marged's, as she was whirled round on Jack Heugh's arm; and the next moment she found herself puzzled by some change in the music. The musician had, in truth, suddenly recollected and turned to effect her old acquaintance, "Poor Mary Ann." As we know, a skilful adapter can

turn the "Old Hundredth" into a waltz, and "Hey, Tutti, Tutti" into a comic song, or a march to victory: so the Fiddler, who having begun by accommodating himself to their tunes, ended by making them dance to his.

"The fiddle's bewitched!" said Ffoulkes, with a laugh, after two vain attempts to get Marged to relinquish the dancing floor; "the devil's in it—hey Fostor?"

In fact, some of the less lusty dancers having given up the floor to an elect remnant, the dance grew fast and furious. The fiddle seemed to hold the dancers in thrall. It did not offer to pause; the Fiddler, apparently, was tireless, and—"possessed"! Man and maid, their feet must obey his bidding and could not cease if they would. Else, it was plain to see, they were tired. Their movements were no longer easy, but feverish and reckless, as if they danced not for their own pleasure, but under the bidding of some hard task-master, like a set of conscious puppets. Occasionally the men cried out:

"Hoo! Hoop!" with sharp staccato shouts almost like cries of pain.

Meanwhile, the storm had not lessened

though the ear might have grown accustomed to its hubbub. As midnight drew on, it gathered head and fury; and at the point of its most angry clamour, once again, after a series of urgent ringings and knockings, the great doors, which had been temporarily secured by bar and chain within, were opened by old Abel.

There entered a drenched, oil-skinned and sou-wester'd sea-dog, his face and beard, his sleeves and legs, gleaming with rain and salt water. He ran the back of his hand across his wet moustache and beard, and then called out, as some of the seafaring men present turned towards him.

“There’s a ship lost, lads, on the Seven Sisters! we want some o’ ye;—hey, what a night, what a night!”

His voice was clamorous, its note urgent; but whether the Fiddler did not understand its import, or whether he chose simply to exercise his powers to the last, he did not cease fiddling. And while he still fiddled, the dancers must dance.

“Mat! Davie! Geordie! Johnny!”

The bystanders called on these young heroes,



who made it a point of honour not to give up before their rivals, and who danced on, reckless of all interruption.

“Mat!” cried Ffoulkes.

“Davie!” cried Mistor Fostor.

“Geordie!” cried a third.

“Johnny; don’t go, honey!” cried that youth’s fond mother.

Persuasion and dissuasion were alike of no avail.

“They must have thor dance oot,” said Mistor Fostor phlegmatically; “an’ if the ship’s lost, she’s lost.”

At last the unmerciful fiddle showed signs of relenting. It softened its strains, and the dancers began to relax, and as it ended, reeled to the benches, where they sank breathless and exhausted.

## CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

### THE SEVEN SISTERS.

“ Oh, what know they of harbours,  
That toss not on the sea ? ”

ERNEST RADFORD.

THE delay in the response of the four dancers—four of the Carne crew that manned the white coble used at such times and on such errands, was enough to make all the difference in the fate of the unfortunate brig that was breaking her back on the knived ridges of the Seven Sisters.

The Seven Sisters were seven rocks, the out-jutting points of a long limestone reef which ran out from the sands about two miles to the north of Carne Hall; where the sand-dunes converted themselves abruptly into sandstone cliffs, with here and there an irruption of the limestone of which the Seven Sisters were composed. A ship driven upon their fatal edges, with the tide at half-ebb, with the wind

sweeping in from the south-east, as it was in tempestuous fury to-night, had as much hope of salvation as an egg-shell under a cart-wheel. At most, it could hope to hold together till some almost instant rescue was effected. Such a rescue, if it came at all, must come in good time from the pilots of Carne. No boat from any northward point could hope to reach the reef in the teeth of such a storm and with the tide against it. Now, of the available Carne pilots, young and old, masters and 'prentices, six out of ten (counting Mistor Fostor), were at Carne Hall; and four of these we have seen dancing away their energies under the spell of the Fiddler bewitched.

"Haway Mat, lad, haway Mat!" Mistor Fostor kept urging that foolish young giant. "Wor Andrer'll be aff before ye get hame; and ye'll lose any salvage there is, you and your mates! If it hadn't been I'd losted my missus, I'd——"

What he would have done must be conjectured. As it was, at this point Abel came to announce that the old travelling carriage was already being harnessed, by Lady Henrietta's orders, to convey any men whose services

could avail, to the Seven Sisters, in the hope of thus expediting a rescue. Two cart-horses, instead of the four coach-hacks anciently allotted to its use, drew it up to the door, while they were discussing it. A few moments more, and, with a couple of gigs and three or four young farmers on horseback for escort, it was despatched with a cheer, at a hand-gallop. Its destination was the fishing hamlet of Redheugh—which maintained a small harbourage, immediately north of the Seven Sisters. For the old hands agreed it was useless to attempt a rescue from Carne now.

On the higher ground above the hamlet, they stopped the chariot, which swayed about on its straps and swings, under the jolts of the sandy uneven road, like a ship in distress. Here Mat jumped out, to look round, and met a blast of air, sand, rain, and salt water that almost blew the "hair out of ma hat!" as he expressed it.

"We'd better drive doon to the DUN COO!" he said, giving the signal to go on, and getting in. "I can mak' oot nothing i' this blast!" The "Dun Cow" was the Redheugh inn.

The coach swayed off again behind its un-  
gainly horses, down the primitive road which  
descended abruptly to the sands ere it reached  
the inn. Here it had nearly run over a man  
advancing across it to the sea. Lights on the  
rocks, and in one or two windows of the place,  
made the surroundings dimly apparent. The  
coach was pulled up on the sands: the man  
it had encountered was a fisherman with a coil  
of rope, and a lantern that had been blown out.

“There’s nae use in your gannin’ farther,  
lads!” he cried. The Carne men leapt out, and  
surrounded him.

“Might as well set sail now in yon greet  
Noah’s ark o’ yours,” he said, “as in ony coble  
we hae here; na, ye’re too late. An hoor,  
half-an-hoor ago, and there was our one  
chance. The wind went away for a bittie;  
and there was just water enough! But we  
had no men: and now ye’re too late. Eh,  
but did ye heör that yell?”

An awful cry came from the dim reaches  
of the reef. Almost simultaneously a bright  
light shone out at its shoreward end.

“That’s the tar bar’l they’ve got alight at  
last!”

It was a flare they had set going, after many attempts, in a nook of the rocks. The flames began to make visible the cliffs, the reef, and the dark uncertain mass of some two-masted vessel, far out, at a distance of a hundred yards or more from shore, the sea breaking over its torn hull in tigerish leaps.

As the flames gained in power, and shot up like a loose bunch of torches, redly illumining the very air, they saw what a desperate pass the wreck had reached. Each sea that swept it made it heel over farther. Its foremast went by the board, carrying with it two more of the few dusky shapes that had still hung on the deadly pitch of its deck, cowering, doomed, beneath the merciless leap and descent of the waves.

Out of the greater darkness, the fire-gleam called into being one brief segment of night and storm. On the very limit of this the doomed ship lay, like a deer beneath an overtaking pack of hounds. But at the fatal moment of the Carne men's coming up with the little band at the flare, one man there broke this silence.

"Gordomé! there's a coble off frae Carne!

She'll be on, she'll be on! O Gordomé, what dae they waänt? Whaät ——?"

He broke off his exclamations to run to the next point of the reef, which the sea had just left tangible. The Carne men followed. Yes! there was the coble, manned by ten men, just hovering outside the seventh Sister and the ship, beyond the breakers.

"Yon's nae ways for her!" said the same spokesman. "They can dae nowt!"

"Young Andrer, tnat's it!" said Mat. "Lads, we're shaämed wi' our dancin'. An' all because he losted his auld mother, and stayed hame! But yon Fiddlor witched ma heels!"

Even as he spoke, the storm had a new access of fury. The wind increased, the ebbing sea made one of those brief recoveries of lost ground that occur at such times. Wave after wave, mountainous, terrible, deadly, leapt and swept over the Seven Sisters. Even under their lee, the attack and recoil were deadly; dreadful to see, terrible to hear!

After one or two vain attempts, the coble had sheered off a little from the wreck, and made as if it would clear the reef. But it was caught

in this monstrous succession of breakers, turned sideways on, and so poised a moment on the edge of destruction. The ninth wave, and the last, ended the fight. It smashed the wreck under its downpour into twenty pieces, driving some fairly over the reef into the boiling water beyond. It caught the coble, hurled it aloft, with its crew of ten, like a cockleshell, and then drove it under water, capsizing it, rolling it over, cracking its shell, and scattering its crew like a handful of chaff.

A common cry of death came from the wreck, the lost coble, and the men at the fire. These last ran down to the sands below the reef. Some half-a-dozen dim forms were seen struggling, striking out, rolled over and over, cast up for a moment, and then swept under, in the dark play of the water in the lee of the Seven Sisters. If any of this mortal wreckage by any chance came ashore while any life still stirred in it, it should be on this strip of sand. What might be the one hope of salvation so, would lie in some strong saviour's arms, prompt to seize, ere the receding wave carried back the live creature it cast up.

“Davie, will ye go?” they asked. He nodded,



buttoning his coat a button higher. The others helped to secure the rope under his arms, and to boot him in a great pair of borrowed sea-boots. At the other end of the rope hung four men as hauliers, and payed out and pulled in, as need were.

Davie spat into the air for luck as he touched the sea's edge. He had not stood there long enough to count five waves ere he had plunged in, and, buffeted a while, had seized on some slim tattered creature, an undersized lad, his poor shirt torn and twisted about his head. Davie got hold of him and carried him in easily, and laid him gently on an oilskin they had spread on the froth and seaweed, in the care of the others who waited there.

A shout recalled them to the water. A Redheugh man had spied another such dark bundle rolling, floating in! And they ran back, not knowing that the boy, when their mates uncovered his small face, gave no sign, and was dead.

A big seaman was the next; but saved too late. They stretched him out unceremoniously on the sand at their feet and hastened back.

Then came one of the coble crew, clasping an

oar with one arm, and struggling desperately with the other. There was a shout as Davie succeeded in catching him at the one moment and carried him in. They all knew the tartan neckerchief and blue shirt, and that deathly, beseeching face: it was young Andrer.

He opened his eyes to close them instantly, as he was set down on a rough bed of coats and rugs: a nasty wound at the back of his head was bleeding, they saw. One of the Carne men took off his own neckerchief, and tore it into two strips for a bandage, and bound up the wound. Then they thought him dying; he had fainted.

They looked round, and saw that the Carne chariot, which some while ago had gone back to the Hall, was returned again. It had drawn up on the sands; two women were dismounting, muffled in furs and in sealskin caps. They stood there hesitating, bending uncertainly to the shock of the wind, and watching from afar: then one of the two advanced, and stooped over the half-drowned man as he lay.

It was Lady Henrietta. She uttered a half hysteric "Ah-yf-f!" as she saw the pale and noble face and the blood-stained kerchief.

When she heard that there was no place near

by for the wounded man, she went back again to the coach and questioned Lady Philippa.

“He looks quite interesting: shall we take him home?”

“If you like.”

Philippa tossed her head disdainfully, and walked a little way off along the sand. Henrietta returned to the rescue-party.

“Bring him to the coach!” she said; “we will carry him to the Hall, and send for a doctor.”

Three men carried him, unconscious, to the coach, which, fortunately, was roomy enough to hold him, outstretched on some rugs across the two seats. Lady Henrietta had meant to say some one must come with them to tend him; but, on another shout from the water-side, they disappeared through the wet and gusty shadows ere she could call on them to stay. She hesitated, after re-arranging the rugs under the stricken man’s head.

Philippa came up and stared in.

“Ugh!” she said, “he is like a fish. . . . I’m not going to ride home with that!”

She set off briskly homewards as she spoke. Henrietta thereupon got in alone.

“Home, Thomas!” she cried.

She closed the cumbrous door herself, and the coach lumbered off. In this semi-state, but less conscious even than a fish, sea-stricken and half-drowned, young Andrer Foster was taken for the first time to his father's house, across the ancient demesne of the Earls of Carne.

## CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

### THE MORROW'S MORN.

“ We kept it up till the break of day,  
But the morrow's morn was the deil to pay ! ”

WHILE the family chariot was chivalrously making its way with its first load to Redheugh and the wreck, the prudent gig, carrying Captain Ffoulkes, Marged, and Mistor Fostor, was returning to Carne Quay. Though the hour was so untimely, lights and faces appeared as they drove up to Mistor Fostor's door, where they must all alight for the ferry.

“ Andrer's awaäy, Fostor ! he's awaäy in the white coble wi' ony crew he could get—to yon wrack ! ”

“ The devil he has ! ” said Ffoulkes, with genuine concern ; “ why, it's a night out of hell ! ”

“ He mought ha' consulted wi' me forst,” said Mistor Fostor, shaking the wet off his hat

under his doorway ; " he 'll be losing the lang coble wi' his mad scarshins ! "

Marged turned pale as she heard. There was no sleep for her beneath the roof-tree of the Inn that night ; she was too excited, tired as she was, to be able to sleep. She saw the coble, captained by Andrer, tossed on frightful seas, crushed under falling masts, broken upon the sharp edges of the Seven Sisters.

Next morning there was consternation in all Carne. Four more of the coble crew, beside Andrer, had been rescued ; seven were drowned.

Tom Hawkins, David Golightly, Harry Reed, John Charlton, Bob Robson, Tom Dunn, and not least, Riley. The names were on everyone's lips ; the blinds were drawn in their windows ; the pilots' jack was at half-mast. In the Seagate, small groups, twos or threes, collected and dissolved, discussing in grave voices, multiplying the sea-terrors of last night. Andrer Fostor himself, it was rumoured, lay dying at Carne Hall.

The " First and Last " was the centre of this tragic circle. Marged went downstairs at nine o'clock, with a racking headache and feverish hands, to find the back-room full already of the

company who usually inhabited there twelve hours later in the day: Three-Quarter Willim, Mistor Fostor, Captain Tom, and a dozen beside. The strong fumes of "Dieppe," and of the tobacco whose smoke curled in a thin stream out of the top of the half-opened door owing to the contrary gusts of wind, were thrice offensive to her as she passed, her nerves alert from her headache.

She hurried on to the lower regions. The kitchen fire looked black, and a dull stythe was driven out by the contrary wind across the apartment. Mistress Ffoulkes, sitting by it had put a black shawl about her shoulders, to protect her from the draught. She was talking apparently to the empty kitchen, when Marged entered; she was really addressing the usual recipient of her gossip — Betsy, who was silently doing something professional in the back-kitchen.

When she saw Marged, Mrs Ffoulkes made no other sign but to increase slightly the emphasis of her remarks.

"I thought better on Mistor Fostor than that to go off to St Andrer's feast, an' Mary, poor auld woman, hardlies cold in her grave. 'Tis a

judgment on him, to lose young Andrer, poor laddie—the varry same time as he was watching the ankles o' the young lassies at the Ha', flittin' about—auld styeg that he is! Word's just come that young Andrer's deein' the morn, and wunnot last out the day. What's that?"

The last exclamation was caused by Marged's half-cry of anguish, where she stood, turning round with pale lips and affrighted eyes, from the china-cupboard in the corner. It only encouraged Mistress Ffoulkes to say more.

"Ay," she said, gazing sternly now at the girl, "ay, while ye was dancin' last night, and yon Fiddlor o' your fancy was fiddlin' his Popish tunes frae Frence, young Andrer, 'at ye despises sae, was droonin' upon the Seven Sisters!"

Poor Marged! Her face grew paler, but she made no further sign. She went calmly about brewing herself some tea—with an air of grave determination. Evidently she was thinking of other things; for she did not hear the further course of Mrs Ffoulkes' remarks; and when she had drunk two cups, without eating anything, she rose to go.

"What's this, Margret?" said Mrs Ffoulkes.



“Oh, nothing!” She disappeared as she spoke.

“Go away after her, and see what she’s up to!” said then Mrs Ffoulkes to her maid.

Betsy presently returned, with the information:

“She is going ower the wator: what for, she winnot saäy!”

Marged had the privilege of crossing the ferry without paying the usual penny. This morning she had put on her best hat and gloves, and a veil, and looked like some stranger to the old ferryman, Peter Reed, whose son Harry had gone out with the ill-fated coble last night. Peter was a blear-eyed old man, whose mouth was always full of tobacco. This morning his head hung low on his oars, and he took small note of his boat-load, consisting of two butchers’ boys, who trailed their red hands in the water, and two farmers’ wives, who were talking in sensational tones of the wreck and its victims.

Marged felt a nervous terror of them and their unctuous discussion of things so near and pitiful, and drew away as far as she could. But she could not help overhearing thus much:

“And ’tis only the othor daäy he losted his wife, an’ now young Andrer—often I seed him as I went by to the market yonder—a fine lad, quite like his grand-dad and the gentries in his Sunday clothes!”

“They do saäy ——” the other began, in a more closely confidential tone, hushing her voice so that only an occasional word—“Lord Carne,” or “when poor Mary was a maid to my Lady!” was at all audible to the rest of the boat.

When Marged alighted, the ferryman held out his hand mechanically; and she, as mechanically, was looking for a penny, when he looked up, and recognised her.

“Aw—’tis Miss Fox!” he said, and there was a world of significance in his tone; “they saäy young Andrer’s lying yonder sick to deid at Carne Ha’! ’Tis a black daäy for’s a’, Miss Fox!”

Till he said this, Marged had not realised that Andrer was not under the Fostor roof, where she had thought of going to ask after him, and to see him for herself.

A swift resolution came to her, making her tremble with many apprehensions as she con-

firmed it, walking up the worn causeway from the ferry landing.

She would go on to Carne Hall. It was the least she could do for her old schoolmate, and her would-be lover, whom she had treated so coldly, she said to herself—so coldly and carelessly, since his mother's death. Though she feared the young ladies at the Hall, with their cold faces, and though she had some natural feeling too about his mistaking perhaps her coming to him—yes—she would go on, and go now, to Carne Hall! As she went she mused much on what the two gossips had said in the ferry-boat, but failed to fathom it.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

### THE BLACK DOG.

“This is not the Black Dog of Newgate neither.”  
*The Witch of Edmonton.*

THIS time Marged followed the Hartwick highway road, by which they had driven home last night. It was noon when she reached the Hall gates, passing along the sunk wall that divided the park from the high road. Her steps faltered as the Hall itself rose into sight; and while she was in this hesitancy, the same black dog that she had seen previously, on coming this way, ran out from the opposite hedge toward her. She was in a mood for sympathy, and called to it; but when it had come within a few yards, it faltered, turned, and fled, with a beaten and hunted air.

She thought no more of it then; for the sense of Carne Hall, and Andrer lying within its gloomy pile, wounded, dying perhaps, gave

her heart a squeeze, as if a cold hand had gripped it.

The Hall gates were open ; as she was entering them, she encountered a dog-cart driving out. It was the family doctor from Stirrelport, and it occurred to her to question him about the patient that he had, no doubt, just been visiting. Fortunately the doctor happened to observe her, and pulled up.

“Oh,” she cries, “will you tell me——?”

She stopped awkwardly, flushing slightly. Her upturned face, with this faint tinge in the cheeks, and her eager black eyes struck the old doctor’s fancy.

“Your sweetheart—eh?” he said, with the privilege of his age and art, and with a slightly quizzical air. “He will soon be all right, my dear! doing as well as can be expected; a little off his head—wouldn’t know you this morning. Better come back to-morrow afternoon, about four; then we will see; nurse him? oh dear no, oh dear no!”

And the doctor whipped up his pony, starting off. She was left standing undecided in the gateway. Before the dog-cart had gone twenty yards in the direction of Carne, it was pulled

up sharply. The doctor, turning in his seat, called back to her—

“Come from Carne Quay, eh? It’s a good walk. I’m going on there now: better come back with me!”

It was one of those privileges that a pretty face may fairly purchase. She went on with a blushing hesitancy to the dog-cart, conscious of a small hole in a finger of one glove. The doctor’s boy had leapt down, and gave her his seat, clambering up to a perch behind.

The doctor dropped her at the top of the steep street at Carne Quay leading to the ferry.

“To-morrow afternoon!” he cried, as she tripped off. “I shall be angry if you don’t come, my dear!”

She returned to the Inn, thrice re-assured, her headache gone; but famished for want of food. As she entered, her father caught sight of her. She told her story with some excitement.

“*Da iawn!*” he cried. “Good, very good!” What was more, the coast being clear, he supplied her from the market round of beef that stood in his glass cage, installing her in Mistress Ffoulkes’ sanctum, and adding a glass of wine. She ate and drank with a schoolgirl’s appetite;

and saw the world rosy through the red wine in the glass.

Thereafter, she retired upstairs with those emotional confidences that a piano may so safely receive. She had spent long hours latterly over its yellow keys; and sung—sung with the beginnings of a power, and with the promise of a voice so clear, so sweet and strong, that Mme. Tegner was beginning to talk openly of more and more extravagant possibilities.

That evening she must go for her weekly lesson to the music-shop; and she had a scale to master ere she went. She sang it over and over, till Betsy came up with Mistress Ffoulkes' peremptory suggestion that "there should be less shoutin', she says!"

Later, that afternoon, Marged, looking out on the ferry from an upper-landing window, as she descended the stairs, was surprised to see the Fiddler, carrying his green baize fiddle-bag, with a black dog sitting at his side in the bottom of the boat, being ferried over by old Peter. Had the Fiddler too, then, again been to Carne Hall?

Some few minutes afterwards, a fine yelping came from the market-place, and led her to a

lower window of the Inn. One of the water-side loafers, who lurked in the alleys betwixt the market-place and the ferry, had thrown a stone, well aimed, at the black dog which was following the Fiddler, and which was limping with the blow. The Fiddler had turned on the water-rat, and in three long strides reached him, and caught him by the throat, and shook him so nervously—twice, thrice. A shout of derisive laughter came from the alley, where no doubt other of the same kidney lurked.

“Give it him, Billy, give it him!”

Hearing this, she was about to run out in affright to the rescue; but the lad was cowed and slunk off as the Fiddler relinquished his hold.

Marged saw him disappear, thereupon, down the Seagate, with his long dragging stride, his bag under his arm, followed by the limping dog; and her heart ran after them.

The same evening, she too went off down the Seagate, carrying her music books, picking her way nervously past its darker alleys by the scattered light of the infrequent, smouldering oil-lamps, that hung on the corners of a few favoured houses.



Ere she started out, the news had come that Andrer was out of danger, but that poor Riley the Red was lost too. Could it be that his wrinkled eyes and red bush of hair would start up never again in the doorway of the "First and Last"? Could one be blotted out so? Her heart grew sick as she thought of it.

She found Mme. Tegner, when she reached the safe harbourage of her parlour, troubled about other things.

The Fiddler had been to Carne Hall, according to his weekly custom, that afternoon; and he had been rudely dismissed by Lady Henrietta, after he had been waiting in the drawing-room, "without a vire—without a vire!" for nearly an hour. And no pony-chaise to meet him, or bring him back!

"*Mon pauvre Pastal*," she kept saying, "*mon pauvre Pastal!* he is come back quite exhaust, and ver' melancholy!"

Mme. Tegner was indeed very indignant, and much excited.

"Oh-a!" she cried, "they are all the same; these peoples, they find somebody; then throw them away, like old glove! what do they care?"

“Wait!” she cried, after this outburst; “I go call him! He shall play to us. I am so angry, I could tell—tell her—somezing! oh, I could-a!”

With this threat, she disappeared, to return with the Fiddler. He looked tired and dejected, and held Marged’s hand long, as if asking for sympathy, when he shook hands with her. Madame begged him to stay.

“*Mais oui!*” he said, “if our friend will also sing!”

He played some *Volkslieder*, so softly, so tenderly, that they brought the tears to Marged’s eyes. Madame vanished, in the midst of these, to make some coffee, she said.

The Fiddler noticed how much Marged was moved. After playing one of them, *Den lieben langen Tag*, he asked:

“Will you sing it?”

She objected that she did not know the words. He persuaded her to sing over the air only, and kept beginning it on the fiddle, pausing for her rejoinder—which never came.

He put down his fiddle, and going to the piano, played it over softly. This gave her courage, and she struck in, singing with the

greatest emotion. When she ended, she saw in her turn, that he was in tears.

“Ah, Mamzelle!” he cried, “it is to Italy you must go! So,—you make me weep! Thousand of thaler you s’all have for every tear the people weep when you sing!”

He persuaded her to sing the air, a singularly moving one, yet again: while she was doing so M. Tegner entered the room.

“Brava!” he cried.

“*Mais oui!*” cried the Fiddler: “*c’est une voix vraiment, une voix de l’opera!*”

“You understand?” M. Tegner asked her. “He says you have a voice—a voice in ten thousand, see, Miss Fox—a voice, *pardieu*, for the stage, for the kings and keens; not for this herring-tub of Carne!”

“For the kings and keens!” was M. Tegner’s favourite allocution to express something superlative, extraordinary! triumphant!

Another moment, and Mme. Tegner reappeared with a little tray of coffee, and a saucer of broken marzipan.

She had heard something of the *Volkslied*; and begged Marged to sing it yet again. She did; and this time all three emotional people wept.

With the coffee, the tears easily turned themselves into laughter. Madame excitedly sketched the future career of the *prima donna* that was to be—Mlle. Margarita! They all laughed very much at this name; and this made Marged blush in turn. And then the Fiddler played again—one of those wonderful Russian dances, full of half Oriental feeling, that so fascinated her.

When it was over, she awoke uneasily to a sense of time, as the clock struck ten. She rose, in a girl's panic. The Fiddler insisted upon escorting her home. While she was waiting in the tiny lobby for him to appear, Mme. Tegner, after helping her on with her cloak, suddenly drew her towards her, and kissed her on both cheeks rapidly.

Said the impulsive woman, "I am grown ver' fond of my little Margarita! I lose my little girl—oh, many years, long ago!"

It gave Marged a new feeling about her tutoress, and about the heart of this exotic household.

When the Fiddler came down:

"Oh," said Madame, "he is very vain to-

night. He has put on his diamond star that the Princess Talka is give him!"

The diamond star was indeed visibly sparkling in his black silk neckcloth.

"It is my amulet—against the dangers of the night!" he said, with a smile.

"Do you believe in such things?" said Marged to him, as they emerged into a black gusty, shivering night.

"Oh—a, yes!"

"Can it keep you from—death?"

"The stars are ministers of life and death. It is all as they will say. They rule the fates of you and me. What can we? what are we?"

"We can do what we like!"

"*Helas*,—no! the stars make it, and what they make must be."

"Perhaps you can't go to Italy then, though you want to?"

"Perhaps! But perhaps I can, and perhaps you can go with me. It is all as they will say!"

She first flushed and trembled at the audacity of such fatalism, and then fell into a muse. To think that one's liberty could be so impaired!

Her mind rebelled at it. Something brushed her skirts, as she thought of it. It was the black dog, which she had not observed before.

The wind grew more and more unruly as they went up the Seagate. Half-way, one of the oil-lamps was blown out as they passed.

"Did the stars do that?" she asked, mischievously.

"No, the wind—I think!"

The wind indeed blew coldly up the narrow side-alleys of the river, with a shrewd waterside damp smell that made her think of the sea, the night, and all their dark powers, so fatal of late. The Fiddler, glancing at her, and seeing her shiver, drew her arm within his gently, but in a certain masterful, composed way that he had. She did not resist.

They had not walked in step more than a score of yards farther, before they heard a sound coming out of the broader alley—a sound of a heavy tread, as if men carrying a heavy burden.

"Stay," she said; "let us wait till they pass!" She was unusually nervous, in fact, and feared to see, or to be seen.

There was a deep doorway beside them; and they drew into its deep and dark recess, while

the dog ran in and out, to and fro. The darkness was extreme. Another shiver shook her nerves, and the Fiddler drew her arm more securely within his. Then—what happened exactly the darkness hid; but she no longer shivered. Instead, a hot wave of maidenly disgust ran through her; and she flung the protecting arm away, stepping forward.

Precisely at the moment, the marching men turned out of the neighbouring alley into the Seagate, the black dog fleeing before them. Marged drew back again, just as hastily as before, with an instinctive terror. The inner darkness of the doorway made the outer darkness of the Seagate comparatively light; and the little troop of men became plainly visible.

There were six of them, and four of them carried a stretcher on which was a dark sinister burden covered with a tarpaulin. One glance told Marged everything. It was the body of young Reed, who lived a little lower down the Seagate. It had been washed into the river to-night with the tide, and they were carrying it home.

The Fiddler's hand travelled to his star.

When they emerged, she put her hand instinctively on his arm for re-assurance ; the stolen kiss was a trifle again. She thought only of the slow tread of the men, and their burden, as the night wind brought the morbidic airs of the riverside to her cheek.



## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

### THE BAR SINISTER.

ON the following afternoon, Marged returned through a Scotch drizzle, at the hour named, to Carne Hall, and found her way to the side-door of the left crescent. An untidy maid, who did not know her, admitted her, and showed her into a pannelled sitting-room, fitted up with such nick-nacks and bijouterie as girls love. A bright fire was burning in the grate.

There she was kept waiting for a considerable time.

At length, she heard an abrupt, irritated step at the door, that roused all her misgivings. It was Lady Henrietta who entered, carrying a taper in one hand. With the taper she lit a candle in a silver stick on the table; and then scanned Marged with a very discomfiting cold scrutiny.

"They seem to have made a mistake in showing you here. Are you the young woman

who has come to inquire after—that—person?" She hesitated for a word, and there was a world of contempt in it when it came. "I don't know," she went on, "why you should,—but enough! the person is quite able to be removed to a place more fitting, where you can be with him. I have ordered the coach—I suppose you have brought nothing of the kind with you?—so as to have him moved as soon as possible. And, since you are here, you may as well at once take charge of your—your relative; I really cannot take any responsibility for him!"

So saying she rang the bell furiously. Marged's eye darted black darts of defiance; but her fears for Andrer's sake kept her from saying anything openly defiant. Indeed, Lady Henrietta had vanished again from the room; and now there appeared in her stead a quite frightened housemaid, who said in subdued tones:

"Follow me, please!"

She led the way into the outer corridor, and so to a door that gave entrance to the central building. Here a light, and voices speaking in subdued but excited tones, proceeded from a door at the end of a lofty passage hung with

family portraits. One of these, as they halted at last, made Marged start: its face of a seventeenth century young man reminded her so subtly of him she was going to see.

Outside the door, another passage met theirs at right angles. This ended in yet another door, which stood wide open, leading into a carriage yard at the back of the house.

As they reached this point a puff of cold air was blown in uncomfortably from the open door. At the other door, now appeared the doctor who had encountered Marged yesterday. He greeted her gently, but abruptly. His manner showed that he was angry,—very angry indeed.

“You are only just in time, my dear! They are turning out my patient in this damned drizzle,—like a dog, like a dog! Oh ay,—there’s the old chariot; they might as well send a hearse at once!”

The last part of this speech he spoke in an aside, so that it should not reach Marged’s ear. He gave a glance down the corridor, and cried:

“Shut that door, Abel, confound you! We’re not ready yet!”

Then he gently pushed Marged into the room.

She found herself in an immense antiquated guest-chamber, a state bed-chamber, where more than one prince had slept when Carne Hall was at its prime. But her eye only roved very casually around the old tapestries, the pale blue moth-eaten silk-hangings, the carved panels, the painted ceiling, on its way to the state bedstead where the wounded man lay.

To her, who had not seen him since he was in the bloom of health—sun-tanned, robust, bright of eye, his face looked ominous and deathly beneath the white bandage, enwrapping all his brown hair with evil effect. Only his eyes gleamed a faint gleam of recognition. But the very splendours of the place made it seem to her more funereal, cold and inhospitable. The state bedstead reminded her of an old print of a death-bed by Hogarth, that hung in the Inn.

“He will die!” she said, at the first glance; at a second, “no, no! he shall not!”

They had already partially dressed him in readiness for his journey. An old military cloak was thrown over a chair, in readiness to cover his shoulders. Despite the slight coarsening that a hard physical life, lived mostly in the

open air, gives to a face, his features, without a doubt, had a singularly emphasised resemblance to the portrait she had noticed in the gallery as she passed.

Marged went over to the bed, on a nod from the doctor, confirming her faltering gesture. Andrer put out his hand, and she took it. It was so unalert in her grasp, that she felt a lump rise in her throat.

“O Andrer!” she said, “dear Andrer!”

Even as she murmured the familiar syllables, and felt her heart throb painfully in the love it hid for him, she heard again the limping, irritated step, that had roused her fears in the other room. The doctor heard it, too, and stole quietly over to the other door; but not in time to prevent the entrance of Lady Henrietta, who paused just within the door, and raked Marged and the doctor with her cold stare.

“The coach is ready, doctor,” she cried, in the coldest, distantest, most peremptory accents, “has been ready this half-hour!”

“I am aware of it, madam! Your forethought has, perhaps, extended also to the two men to carry my patient to it.” If Lady Henrietta’s tone had been caustic, the doctor’s had

the clipt military precision of an old army surgeon.

"I have no men!" she replied; "he must walk!"

"It is impossible. To walk as far as the door of the room would kill him!"

"I can't be responsible. This young woman," she indicated Marged; "and his nurse," she pointed to the ancient dame; "they can assist him!"

"No, madam!" The *no* was like a pistol bullet.

The doctor glanced uneasily at his patient, in concern for the effect of this passage of arms upon him. He had stirred uneasily, and now said, in a voice distinct, but as it were remote:

"I can walk!"

The doctor raised a warning finger. He took out his watch.

"If two men are not forthcoming, my Lady, and within a very few moments, my patient must stay here to-night!"

She bit her lip, and left the room. The doctor poured some pale liquid into a glass, and administered it to his patient, who said:

"I want to go home, doctor; I want to go!"

He had barely drunk his dose, ere heavier steps were heard in the passage. It was Abel, the footman, and Thomas, the coachman. The doctor went to the door, ordering them to wait; then returned to the bedside and proceeded to prepare the sick man very carefully and tenderly for the being trans-shipped. Then, in turn, he went to the coach, carrying a soft coverlet with him.

These small delays gave Lady Henrietta an opportunity to re-appear. Some nervous perverse disposition was evidently upon her, that did not allow her to be absent from the scene. In a moment of weakness, she attempted another reminder:

"Since you must be so particular, doctor, pray observe it is fast growing dark!"

The doctor rather lost his self-command for a moment.

"All the better, madam," he cried, "that no one may see in what state you turn out your own ——," either *brother*, or *flesh and blood*, he was going to say, without a doubt; but instead he said, "guest!" He added, "ay,

and what the hospitality of Carne Hall has come to!"

"*Qu'importe?*" she said coldly; "this is not necessary; the coach is waiting."

Marged's feelings grew too much for her at this, and she too turned round.

"You are a wicked woman," she cried, "a wicked woman! Oh ——," her voice broke. The doctor went to her, and touched her arm.

"We want your help!" he said, significantly. He called in the two men; gave Marged a lighted taper to carry, on accompanying them to the coach; and so the little procession started. Half-way along the passage, the door of the drawing-room where the Fiddler had waited so long yesterday, was standing open. It disclosed Lady Henrietta lying in ambush, with Philippa hovering behind her.

Philippa tried to brush forward as they passed.

"I want to see *it!*" she cried.

Henrietta put out a hand to restrain her.

They both followed the procession to the door into the courtyard; Lady Henrietta still trying to hold back her younger sister, without openly showing the effort.

The wounded man had been tenderly stowed



amid the rugs in the coach, Marged standing by, taper in hand, her lips tight pressed, her face pale with anger and anguish.

The sight of the two sisters on the step was too much for the doctor: he partly closed the door of the coach and went back to them.

"If he dies," he said, "I ask you to remember that his death is of your doing! You have turned him out as I would not turn out a dog, and on such a night!"

The drizzle in fact had become a rain, which threatened to extinguish Marged's taper.

Lady Henrietta laughed, recovering her unconcern.

"A dog is different!" she said lightly.

"Oh," the voice was Marged's, "you are a wicked woman—a wicked ——." She dropped the taper as the doctor turned her round, midway, and handed her into the coach; then raising his hat, stepped in after her.

"Go on!" he cried, "go on, for God's sake!"

At the last moment Lady Philippa brushed Henrietta aside.

"Stop, Thomas!" she cried, "they have taken the new chaise cushions! and he is sure to spoil them!"

"Go on!" thundered the doctor from the window.

Thomas grinned and drove off; his wages were already owing him for some months, and he might have a worse friend than Doctor Hazard.

"So much for the bar sinister!" the doctor said to himself. Possibly he was reflecting how the Carne family first came into being with the bar on its fifteenth-century coat-of-arms.

But the last of the Carnes was unconscious of these things as he made his exit, perforce, from the house of his fathers.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND.

MARGED SINGS.

“ For when of pleasure she doth sing,  
My thoughts enjoy a sudden spring ;  
But if she doth of sorrow speak,  
Even from my heart the strings do break.”

ON the third afternoon following the evening of young Andrer's despatch from Carne Hall, Marged might have been seen mounting the narrow stairs of the Fostor household, and knocking at the door of the bed-chamber where his mother had died, not so many weeks ago.

An old neighbour, Mistress Waite, who had tended the sick-room then, was in charge now. She came to the door, a tremulous old dame with a rheumy eye.

“ Eh, Miss Fox, he saäys ye needna fash wi' him ony mair. An' he is bettor !”

“ Has he slept ?”

“ Na ; he keeps on mum-mumblin' about Carne Ha' and sic like. ‘ Me Lord,’ he keeps saäyin', ‘ whaät for not, me Lord ? whaät for not ? ’”

"H'sh!" whispered Marged, for there came a slight rustle from the bed.

"Is that you, Marged? Come away in. Mistress Waite can gan doonstairs for a bit."

The old woman made a chattering noise betwixt her toothless jaws, meant to show disapprobation; but she went her way, nevertheless, and was probably glad to go.

"What was the auld fool sayin'?" he said, when the door had closed after her.

"Nothing, nothing—save that ye didna want me to come any more."

"Nae mair I do: I'm gettin' bettor."

He slightly raised himself on one side as he spoke. Marged stirred the fire in the tall grate, and its light was red enough to make the best of his pale face and the ominous white bandage on his head. She noticed in it again the well-cut lips, the faintly-arched nose, the high brows of the old portrait in the corridor; which were more in keeping, it must be admitted, with the faded state bed-chamber there, than with these narrow surroundings—the grotesque china dogs, the disproportioned, clumsy bedstead, and the rest.

She went and stood by the bedside.

"Have you slept?" she asked.

"Na. I'm tired wi' lying here."

"You know what Doctor Hazard says."

"No."

"Yes you do: eat and sleep, sleep and eat."

"I canna sleep for thinking."

"I'll sing you to sleep, shall I?"

"Ye'll can try."

She began to sing, sitting in the firelight.

She began merely to croon, at first, the *Volkslied* she had tried over on that memorable evening at Tegner's. It affected him somewhat as it had affected them then. She could just see his face, turned toward the firelight, from her seat. He had closed his eyes; but two tears stole from under the lids. When she paused, he spoke—

"I heard that somewhere—ay, only yesterday, I did. Yesterday, when I was lyin' in yon ball-room at the Ha'."

"You musn't talk; you must sleep. Silly Andrer, it wasn't a ball-room! How did you hear it?"

"Yon Fiddlor was fiddlin' in the neist room."

"H'sh, go to sleep. I'll sing you another."

She tried, now, an old Italian lullaby that Madame had taught her to sing. This time he was breathing as soundly as a tired boy when the last note died on her lips.

“He is asleep,” she said.

But no: he opened his eyes again.

“Yon’s a rare Fiddlor. I heard that too.”

She cast about in her mind this coincidence, and then, half-unconsciously, thinking of the Fiddler, whose vivid personality was a constant guest in her fancy during these days, she began to sing one of the north-country airs she had heard him adapt to his fiddle—“Oh, Blow the wind southerly.”

This air, which she sang very softly, took effect. It is true Andrer murmured,

“I heard that too!”

But he rather sighed the words than spoke them, as one does when one’s waking current of thought is ebbing away. He did not go on sleeping for more than half-an-hour; Marged was contemplating the fire, and thinking, and wondering much—of Carne Hall, of Lady Henrietta, whom she hated with an active and exciting hatred; of the doctor, whom she liked; of Andrer, whom she loved as a dear

brother; and of the Fiddler, to whom she did not like to try and decide her feeling.

Lost in these thoughts, and thoughtfully winding and unwinding a coil of black hair which she had loosened—trusting in Andrer's sleeping, and in the dusk of the room, she was startled by a sudden cry from the bed:

“Marged, where's Riley?”

Her face fell, as she turned it toward the bed.

“He——” she began.

“He is dead; he is dead; and 'twas I 'at killed him!”

“He was drowned,” she said simply; “drowned with the rest! You mustn't say such things!”

She crossed over again to the bedside as she spoke.

“'Twas me, Marg'd, 'at persuaded Riley to go—Riley and the rest!”

“'Twas a brave chance, Andrer: if you'd asked me, I'd have gone! When we were dancing and carrying on, you were out in that black water: oh, but 'twas a brave chance; and I would I were a man like you!”

“Better if I'd been dancing! then wouldna

Riley ha' gone under. I'll never can forget seein' his red heid sink away doon under my hands when I gripped at it. He went doon like a rusted anchor!"

He had risen up, trembling with excitement, as he told this; and each sentence was spoken more and more feverishly, his eyes enlarging themselves to all the past things he described.

Marged grew afraid, both at the feverishness in him, and at the vivid way he made her see these things in the memory of one who had faced the sea-death, and seen others die by it. She shuddered.

"What do you think, Marged? What gets them that's drowned—dragged down like that—and no time to cry Christ keep us!"

"There's plenty of room for all where they are gone!"

"I wonder at that sometimes. Dead bodies go aäl to nothing; and we see nothing more come of them as is drowned!"

"Don't, Andrer—I cannot bear ye to talk like that. I'll sing ye another song; 'tis a burial one; but 'tis one 'at my mother taught me: and when I sing it, I know she is there—and when I sing it, I know I'll go to her,—and



so will you—and all brave men, and all kind people: but not La——!”

“Who?”

“It doesn’t matter: lie still, and I’ll sing it to you!”

So she sang that most moving hymn in the ancient tongue of her fathers, which is not to be translated:

“Bydd myrdd o ryfeddodau.”

She only remembered the one verse, and sang it twice over. He said then:

“That’s the queer’st burying song I ever heard—words and tune; ay, and what’s queeror, the Fiddlor must have played it too. . . . Marged, are ye caring much for him? He’s a long, fond-looking slip! But he can fiddle! Be sure he works ye nae wrang, Marg’d. I’m grown varry old sin’ my auld mother died i’ this bed. She told me to marray you, Marg’d; but that’s come oot now that ye dinna know on; and I’ll never can marray now, never; and ye mustn’t come here after the night! But ye’ll give me one kiss before you go. . . . I didna mean to drown Riley and them; ye know that?”

Marged’s reply was a kiss; and then she

stole out of the room, for she felt the burning in her eyes of hot, uncontrollable tears. There was something more in this—the renunciation of herself, and this morbid responsibility for the death of the drowned men, than she could fathom. But she knew all his story now, and that things could never be quite on the old footing between them ; and this because of his own judgment of himself. A terrible aching was in her heart for him ; and the ache seemed to find its way up into her throat.

“I shall never be happy again,” she sobbed that night, after looking out across the river to the light in one window there — “never again !”

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD.

### A WINTER SUNDAY.

IT was on the following Sunday morning, a bleak, bitter day, with an occasional scattering of dry thin snowflakes, that Marged, looking out of the window on hearing a sound of men singing in the market-place, saw there a knot of people gathered around a street preacher. The singing sounded to her ear, fervent, but crude, and would have rather repelled her; but when it ended and the preacher began to speak, his voice was so resonant, so penetrative, that she could not but pause to listen.

She was trying to connect some of the uncertain syllables that she caught, scanning the preacher's bared, grizzled head, and firmly upheld right arm, when she noticed two new listeners advancing, as if from under the Inn itself, toward the preacher. One of the two, she saw to her surprise, was Andrer Fostor. She almost cried out as she recognised him;

and felt a burning desire to go and speak to him, and touch his hand.

After watching a few minutes longer, she went downstairs and put her head in at the door of the small parlour, where her father sat smoking and drinking old ale with a Bristol sea-captain, an old crony, whose ship had come into Carne yesterday.

"Come in, Marged!" cried her father; "come in, and see Captain Kenton, who gave you your silver mug when you were christened—the mug with the ship on it!"

She went in, and the Bristol captain laughed out when he saw her. He was one of your stertorously jovial sea-dogs.

"Faith, Ffoulkes—she's well past milk an' christenin' mugs! Ye'll soon want the silver forks for the wedding!"

He drew her down to his red face, as he spoke, and kissed her. To relieve her embarrassment at this salute, which was sufficiently hearty, and with a shy desire to divert attention from herself, she turned to her father.

"Young Andrer's out there!" she said.

"Where?"

"In the square, listening to the preaching!"

"That's your man, Peter Harris, then," said the Innkeeper; "he hasn't lost any time about it, eh?"

"Ay, ay, that's Peter, sure enough: there'll be many a one on his knees ere's done!"

The Bristol captain had been telling Ffoulkes, before Marged appeared, how he had come to carry this perfervid evangelist as a passenger all the way from Bristol to the port of Carne, on his way to preach to the north-country colliers.

"A tarrible man, Peter! He has the throat of a trumpet—did ye hear that?" added the ship captain now, as a louder echo of the preacher's thunder reached their ears.

"I'd be afraid to listen to him," murmured Marged, half to herself.

"Many's frightened; but, bless your heart, missie, he wouldn't so much as damn a ship's rat if he knew it. Ye see, he can't help himself, 'tis put on him by the A'mighty, I s'pose. But there's a man he is: the slips at Bristol was black with the people, come to see him him off. And the women crying, an' waving their kerchers!"

"I swanny!" cried Captain Ffoulkes, "I'd

like to have a spy at this Harris! It minds me of old times, when I was a youngster in Cardigan, and no sins but pippins to make me afraid on dark nights!"

"Did he preach aboard ship?" asked Marged, revolving his possible effect on young Andrer's mind.

"Thank the Lord, no!" replied the ship captain fervently. "Peter was sea-sick; prayers can't cure that complaint!"

At this point, Captain Ffoulkes got up and went to the Inn door to try and catch a glimpse of him. Marged followed. The Bristol captain preferred his ale-pot. Another moment and Ffoulkes returned for his hat.

"Won't ye come, Kenton?" he asked with a touch of boyish eagerness.

"No!" the other shook his head.

"Sunday ashore,  
Shut the door!  
Said Jack to his —, ahem!"

he sang, or hummed, softly.

Marged had already gone to get her cloak, which, being of crimson, made a bright spot of colour in the sombre male crowd in the square, this grey morning.

The congregation around the preacher was by this grown into its hundreds. Such casual arrivals as Marged and her father were apt to press upon the inner strata of his hearers, forcing them nearer. When Marged caught sight of Andrer's face, it was to find him in the very heart of the crowd.

The men of Carne are a tall race; Peter Harris was a comparatively small man; so Marged had to be content at first with listening to his burning tones and noting from time to time their effect upon Andrer's features.

The preacher was by way of unfolding his peculiar view of the Atonement, and developing from it many calls to the unconverted. He was drawing a terrible picture of the great Judge of all men, seated in might on a throne as in some awful hall of justice. Before this Judge he summoned a motley array of sinners—thieves, false witnesses, adulterers, drunkards, murderers, atheists. He went through them categorically, making his types into living men, realised with a convincing vigour of description; and he dismissed them with sentences of a swift justice without mercy. He came to the murderer

(murders, it may be said, had been rife in the country of late):

“Blood for blood, a life for a life,” he cried, “that is the law! But there is another law than the law of man: there is the law of Him who sitteth on the throne! A life for a life, ay, but hearken: is any murderer among you?”

At this word, Marged saw Andrer's face turn paler than the lingering pallor which his sickness had left, and turn to make his way out of the crowd; he emerged only some two or three paces away from where they stood, and again his face grew a distinct tinge whiter, and he trembled visibly. She drew her father's attention, and turned to help him. Captain Ffoulkes, thinking he had been left weak from his wound, took one arm, she the other, and together they led him off across to the Inn.

There they took him into the parlour, where the Bristol captain still sat smoking.

“Gaddy, Peter's hit him hard!” said he, as he looked at the young man, in an aside to the Innkeeper.

The latter filled a small glass with brandy, and Andrer swallowed it down feverishly.



"A life for a life," he said, speaking to himself: "God help my heart—I hae lost seven!"

Evidently he was brooding upon the lost coble and its crew; and in his sensitiveness of conscience he had misunderstood the drift of Peter Harris's argument. Indeed, the preacher, at the very moment of Andrer's being led away, was on the point of declaring the entrance of the Mediator, to temper the terrors of retributive justice.

But this had not reached Andrer's ear, and when he rose, saying he was going home, he did so with an air that half offended Captain Ffoulkes, for he looked around the room as if he saw no one, and he made no attempt to say a word of thanks or of friendly leave-taking.

Marged tried to intercept him as he went:

"Andrer," she said, "you are not fit to go over the water like that. Stay a little, and I'll can go with you!"

But he shook his head without looking at her, and so left the room. She followed him to the side-door in the alley, only in time to see it shut after him.

"That's a sick man," said the Bristol cap-

tain ; " a man like that's not fit to stand up to Peter ! "

" Ay, 'tis he—Mistor Fostor's youngster—as I was telling you, took out that coble to the Seven Sisters. A nasty night, and a nasty knock he got on his head. It knocked him a bit daft, strikes me ! They oughtn't have let him out such a day's this ! "

Meanwhile Marged had gone upstairs, feeling utterly baffled and miserable. She went up to her room, and watched Andrer's boat as he rowed himself slowly back. But she could not know how he talked to himself on the way over, half mimicking, as it might seem, the sonorous tones of the preacher :

" ' A life for a life,' he said : and I hae lost seven. Ay, and Riley too," he added, with increasing bitterness, as if he asked the question of the boat which Riley had so often pulled across the ferry ; " did ye see how his brither Will eyed me in the alley ? Ay, doubtless, they all know I was misbegotten, and 'at I am no man's son ! "

When he had landed and put up his boat, instead of going into the house, as one might have expected, he went up the outer staircase

of his boat-loft, which he had not visited since that fatal night; and Marged, still looking out anxiously across the ferry, saw him close the door after him.

Within he found reminders in plenty of poor Riley's former part in the work of the place, which had been left entirely undisturbed till now. He looked around with a half-feverish apprehension of these traces, and in doing so his hand travelled to his head with an instinctive and wandering gesture. His head burned in fact: probably the brandy had sent the blood to his brain, and to the barely-healed wound. He looked round for something to cool it with. One of the last things he had asked Riley to do was to fill a wooden pail, which stood now in a corner of the loft. He turned, taking off his neckerchief, intending to dip it in the pail: but the water had completely evaporated. The remedy was simple: he had but to let the pail out of the loft window into the river, which ran conveniently underneath, by means of a rope fastened to it. In doing so, as he landed the pail on the floor, his attention was drawn to a piece of wood, curiously curved, which the pail had dipped up with the water. This piece of

wood, with an apparent perversity, did not float on its flattest surface, but instead held itself in the liquid so that the tips of its curves stuck up. As he dipped his neck-cloth into the pail, he tried to immerse these tips, and to force the piece of wood to float on its side. But no, it always righted itself when he let it go.

“The deil’s in it!” he said at last. In fact, it greatly struck his fancy, trained to note the buoyancy of all the woods used in boat-making.

He sat long there, his head swathed in his wetted neck-cloth on a corner of the tool-bench, looking at the wood bewitched. When at length he stood up again, a whole weight of moody melancholy had fallen from him.

“I have it!” he cried; “man, Riley, I have it!” In his excitement he dropped back into the habit of invoking his old familiar spirit. What he had, in truth, was a sudden illumination of a boat cunningly contrived on the lines of this piece of wood: a boat which no sea could upset! The hundred pounds that he had on his mother’s death enabled him to work independently if he liked; and with such a boat, he could atone for the lives he had lost.

The stain of bastardy, the thought of the drowned men, and all else whose weight rested on his troubled mind, should so be wiped out and repaid! And then, and then—he stretched his arms out, pulled himself together, and laughed a boyish laugh; for he had a sudden vision of Marged Ffoulkes in her crimson cloak.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

### THE BEGGARS' OPERA.

IT was the seventh of December, and Marged might have been seen making her way toward the sea, in a December mood which would not be shaken off; although the day was, for the season, clear and sunny, and almost mild. Passing the music shop on the other side of the street, she noticed a long, narrow bill fastened on the glass inside the window, and felt her curiosity stirred. The music sheets and advertisements of this isolated shop window were always potential.

She did not cross the road, however; but kept her way, dropping back into other thoughts — thoughts of Andrer, Carne Hall, and the rest. The sea was calm, and did not amuse her; and she soon returned from the pier. On the way back, she found that someone beside herself had been on an idle errand to the sea; for she heard a step on the sandy pebbles

below the stone parapets of the approaches to the pier. On looking over, she saw the Fiddler walking back toward the town, closely attended by his black dog.

In the ordinary course of things, their converging paths must eventually meet, and she hesitated at the meeting. She had not seen the Fiddler since the evening, a week ago, of the episode in the dark doorway; and her maiden spirit was still in arms at the recollection. She rather hung back, loitering on each foot, and softening her step so that it should not be too audible. In this way she contrived to let the Fiddler reach the outskirts to the Seagate twenty yards in advance; and they maintained this disconnected procession of two until they were in sight of the music shop.

But then Marged felt a sudden desire not to let the Fiddler escape without a word of greeting. The droop forward of his head, as he walked, was melancholy, she thought; his long black coat, for he wore no cloak to-day, was seedy. She quickened her step, and its echo caught his ear. He turned his head, bowed, recognising her, and waited. The black dog ran to and fro twice betwixt them in this

interval. To relieve her embarrassment, she stooped to try and pat the beast's head, just as she came up with him.

"What do you call your dog?" she asked, "for you have adopted it, haven't you?"

He did not understand, or did not choose to answer.

"You have been to the pier?—" he began to stumble over some conventional phrases in his turn, to which she again did not attend. Their last meeting had left her only disconcerted by his presence, now that she was at his side. Luckily, they were near the door of the music shop; and lo! there was M. Tegner himself standing within the doorway whistling softly. At sight of them he stepped out nimbly on his slippered toes, and with half-a-dozen delighted nods and bows confronted them on the pavement.

"*Est-ce-que tu as conte à Mamzelle?*" he began, to the Fiddler, pointing to the little bill pasted within the window.

The Fiddler shook his head. "*Mais non* —!" He was probably about to explain that he had not yet had an opportunity, but the little Frenchman gave him no time, but



catching Marged's arm lightly, drew her to the window.

"There! read there!" he said, pointing to the bill.

She read :

Theatre Royal, Hambro'

*FOR TWO NIGHTS ONLY*

THE BEGGARS' OPERA

*MONDAY & TUESDAY*

*Decr. the 10th and 11th, 1795*

By the Distinguished Compy. from  
Saddler's Wells

L O N D O N

M. Tegner did not permit her to end her silent inspection of this play-bill, the first she had ever seen; but interrupted her ere she had read more than its first few headlines.

"So!" he said at last, "I have the honneur to beg Mamzelle to be go with Madame and me, *et notre ami*, to the play! I have the ticket; we take the coach!"

"I'm afraid—my father——" Marged began to stammer out her fears.

"Oh, the Capitaine; but I will speak!"

"But my mother—I——"

"The Capitaine will say—and 'tis all the same for Madame. So?"

"I'm afraid ——"

"*Mais non, Mamzelle, mais non!* I will speak, *ce soir!* you s'all see: ah then you will come! *ah, quel plaisir!*"

He bowed himself back into the music shop with many rapid bows and dancing-master's gestures; the Fiddler, hat in hand, following, and smiling a friendly corroboration that lit even his inscrutable eyes as they caught the gleam of the winter sun.

"On Monday—Monday!" she heard him murmur, in significantly eager accents, as he disappeared within.

Her pulses danced with anticipation as she hurried away.

"The play, the play!" she kept repeating

to herself. It was an invitation into fairy-land.

Fortunately for the hopes thus roused, Mistress Ffoulkes, good woman, found the December damps so trying to her rheumatics that, about this period, she was obliged to content herself with directing her daily campaign from above-stairs. She kept the house in a continual state of ascent and descent; when she did not require its human items to sit with her by the hour, absolutely mum—a service that she insisted upon at intervals.

Captain Ffoulkes himself being a sufferer by the sickroom *regime*, took all the burden upon him of deceiving the old woman, who was not to be informed of Marged's play-going till the party was well on its way to Humbro'. This was an easy matter as it happened; since the start must needs be early.

A mail-gig left Carne Quay at eight o'clock every other week-day morning to meet the mail-coach, "Borderer," at Stirreport, on its way south to Humbro'. This meant starting in the dark on winter mornings, a necessity which

young people in Marged's state of inexperience thought highly amusing.

It meant getting up by candle-light, eating one's breakfast in one's cloak and hat, and looking out into the market-place before the shops had taken their shutters down, with lanterns at the ferry, and many other novel phenomena, of which mature experience makes little, but which young imagination can turn to exciting account.

That morning Marged went and stole Betsy's candle (getting up for once before that sturdy maid) to add to the illumination of her own; and by the double light contrived a prolonged and very subtle toilet, with quite new effects in the doing of her hair, in spite of icy water and other such incidental drawbacks. Then came the peculiar excitement of stealing downstairs in hat and cloak, but with her shoes in her hand, so that the sleeping dragon should not be awakened. By this time Betsy had recovered her candle, and watched her mistress try to lace two shoes, and drink hot coffee, and eat two slices of bread and butter, all at one and the same time. In the midst of it Meg heard her father call her softly.

Betsy went to look.

“There’s yon little dancin’-man, an’ the Fiddlor wi’ him, waiting for ye, Miss Maggie! Oh, I wish’d ye werena going off wi’ them! They saäy yon Fiddlor is na canny, an’ I’m sure he looks it!”

Marged laughed, as she ran off, adjusting her cloak. But Betsy, in trying to drink up the coffee her mistress had left, half-choked herself. Dropping her unkempt head in her red arms on the table, she began to sob, partly overcome, no doubt, by the thought that she would be her sick mistress’s sole victim that day.

In the flurry of leaving the Inn, and in the excitement of crossing the ferry by lantern-light, Marged did not remark at once the absence of Madame. But as they ran hastily up the steep street to the “Rose and Crown” at Carne Quay, from whose door the mail-gig started, and still no trace of that lady appeared, a spasm of anxiety did touch her nerves. The crazy, ungainly mail-gig stood waiting; and here was a surprise! Only two seats remained vacant on the back-seat!

M. Tegner went through a little pantomime of indignation, directed at the driver; very well done, but not quite convincing.

“Then I cannot go!” he said, with a shrug, and proceeded to hand Marged up to one of the seats, while she attempted to expostulate feebly. But she was too far over the edge of adventure to draw back, and already the driver was stowing a last package in the over-loaded vehicle, and gathering the reins.

Before she quite realised it, the gig had whirled round the corner, and attained the main highway above; and they were being driven off at a round pace westwards up the river, while the chill dilatory December dawn mounted the eastward sky.

For a mile or two she nursed a lingering resentment at being thus left alone with the Fiddler, without other resource, for so long a journey. But then her spirits revived as they crossed the common beyond the hamlet of Kells, and she saw the seaward course of the river, with Carne and Carne Quay sending up their morning smoke into the heavy sky, and the harbour and the uncertain line of the sea beyond.

These things meant so much to her that she exclaimed—“Oh, look!”

The Fiddler raised his melancholy eyes and

gazed vacantly around. He was chilled by the raw airs of the sunless morning, and after one or two rebuffs from his companion at starting out, had relapsed into his own moody thoughts.

"Dhreadful!" he murmured, "why then do people live in such a dhreadful place? Herring tub, Madame is call it!"

"Why do you stay there, then!"

The Fiddler shivered a little.

"Kismet!" he said.

Marged understood what he meant, but she always grew embarrassed when he used strange words. A silence fell then betwixt them that lasted for a mile or more. At length, growing weary of this state of things, she tried to get him to disclose something appetising about the play that evening.

"The Beggars' Opera?" he laughed a diffident, dry laugh. "Opera for beggars, I think. Oll the same, M'lle Margarita, it is no opera."

"But M. Tegner," she began.

"So; he have want you to go to the play, and the play *is* the play; but there is only one opera — *Vois-tu!* — *le grand Opera — l'Italian!*"

He hummed a strain from Don Giovanni. His eye brightened : he began an extraordinary little monologue to himself thereupon, of which the refrain was "Italy—O Italy!"

Marged could not follow it altogether, but she gathered the sense of it. Putting it into his terms, it ran on the lines of that famous song of another fairer world than the grey north :

"Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach,  
Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach ;  
Und Marmorbilder stehn, und sehn mich an :  
Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, gethan?"

"To the South you must go, to the South—if you would sing! To Italy, O Italy!"

This refrain ran in her mind all the rest of the journey by the side of him whose horizon was so much wider than hers, opening out vistas of worlds so much fuller of life, of power, of colour, of music, than the narrow world of Carne.

Already, when they reached Stirrelport, they touched, she felt, a quicker current of life, as they drew up at that famous posting-house, the "Lion," and mingled with strange people on the pavement. And when the coach came,



drawn by its four hot horses, and announced by a curt Ta-ra-ra! from the guard's horn, it treated the place as a mere incident of ten minutes, and whirled them off again as inside passengers, ere they had seen anything of the town. It gave her an immense sense of the elasticity of her old accustomed boundaries of her familiar day at the "First and Last." These inns were so much larger, so much more thronged with eager faces and urgent feet!

What Stirrelport was to Carne, Humbro' was to Stirrelport. The lamps were lighting in its streets as the coach swept by its outlying purlieus, and vista after vista flitted past Marged's insatiable eyes. She was astonished to see a fat gentleman yawn as he alighted from the coach. To her every glimpse, the wheels on wheels, the hurrying people, the lights, the shop-windows, was an event.

The Fiddler bore himself as one used to these sensations, and attended on her every inexperience, with a half-amused, but entirely gentlemanly air. She was to spend the night with the widow of a corn-chandler; a sister of Captain Tom, and a former Carne woman, who still resided snugly enough over her husband's

shop, and carried on his business, in the High Street. The Fiddler was to stay at the inn, the "Chequers," where they had alighted and where he insisted on ordering some tea for her in the great coffee-room, ere they went off to discover the corn-chandler's widow.

With that good woman he left her, being subjected to anything but a favourable scrutiny, during the moment that he spent in the shop through which the house was entered.

"I canna stand furrinors," she said to her guest afterwards: "they aäl have a look of Boneyparte, to ma thinkin'!"

She actually insisted upon sending her maid to the theatre when the time came, as an additional escort, and this damsel was instructed not to leave Marged's side until she was safe within the doors of the building. The Fiddler accepted the situation with great good humour; and once inside the theatre he might well be touched by his travelling companion's reliance upon his wider experience of men, things, and play-going. She kept her hand on his arm, and clung close to him as they mounted the wide entrance staircase, amid the streams of fine ladies and gentlemen, who astonished

her by their careless splendours and diffident manners.

Upon one tall, superbly-attired girl, whose feathered fan and perfumed silk sleeve brushed her red cloak amid the throng mounting the staircase, she could not cease looking. It was a face that well revealed the grace and lightly-accepted luxuries of the patrician class, whose life had so remotely touched hers till now. Was it possible to be so softly and exquisitely dressed ; to hold one's head, delightfully adorned, so nobly ; and to have one's life fenced from actuality by such a charmed circle of flowers, feathers, and fragrances ? This vision of a higher sphere sat opposite to them, on a lower tier, through the play. They sat in a tiny box at the very top of the house, which turned Marged giddy for a second, when she gazed down at the stage. But when the curtain rose, the motley Cockney comedy there presented, and the lyric charms of the sprightly Polly Peachum, made her forget all else.

It was all so new and wonderful to her : the stage with its picturesque pasteboard Newgate, and its inimitable and preposterous beggars, whose lyric airs and graces, whose amorous

irresponsibilities, she found so engaging. And then the apparently merry people above and below, and the apparently staid people between : the lights, the costumes, the farce, the sentimental passages, the sweet tunes, the careless frolic of the fiddles : all and everything so employed her mind, that she quite lost herself in her surroundings, and for the time being was merely a part of what she saw !

Otherwise, if she had been less pre-occupied, she might have noticed that her companion frequently looked away to the more fashionable tier of seats below theirs, where in the front row of all sat two extremely striking girls ; both attired in elegant but rather old-fashioned satin frocks, accompanied by a military-looking young man. It was Lady Henrietta and her sister Philippa.

Toward the end of the first act, while Marged was hanging entranced on Polly Peachum's lips, the Fiddler slipped away from her side unperceived at the moment, and did not return when the curtain had fallen for the interval. A little disturbed, she looked round anxiously then, and discovered the two sisters, with a fear that they accounted for the Fiddler's absence.

Speedily, however, the curtain rose again on a scene that was not, she knew, in the play—a scene representing a gilded hall, which was, to her thinking, of an unimaginable splendour.

A moment's pause, and there walked slowly on to the stage, and down almost to the foot-lights, a tall, dark figure, whose appearance there caused her brain to reel for a flying second. It was her fellow-playgoer, her familiar companion of the way, her friend of quite other surroundings, the mere Fiddler of Carne, of the Seagate, the music shop! But so transformed, in so sumptuous an attire, bowing so calmly to the crowded house, ere he adjusted his fiddle to his chin, and tightened a string, that she asked herself in amaze if it really were he?

Another flying second, and he had run through some prelude chords, and the fiddle was discoursing one of those apparently simple, and really amazingly subtle, threads of melody, which, ere you knew it, had carried you into that magic region where music and thought and feeling are one. Out of that charmed place there was no escape, not until the spell was broken, and you had lived through years of emotion. The fiddle cried and laughed; and

people who had shut up their hearts for ever cried and laughed with it. It ran through the history of the heart: its ambition, its young love, its pride of the world; its mortal decay, its parting, and its dark death. That crowded playhouse, composed of all different atoms, old and young, high and low, rags and velvet gown, was like one man under its spell. The fiddle disclosed to them heaven and hell: it opened, that is, their own dark hearts to them, and they turned pale as they listened. It ended with a funeral march, and out of the bowels of that one small curved instrument there came an army of slow feet, and a multitude of marching people. The sorrow of that dead march there was no telling; and the faces that paled before now wept; and Marged dropped her head in her hands, upon the balustrade of the box. She was only aroused by the silence that ensued for a few seconds: and then from the vast audience, as it awoke from its trance, there burst such a furore of applause as might have made Marged shed fresh tears of excitement.

The Fiddler returned to bow his acknowledgments, but the house refused to let him go so, and roared and roared again until he

returned a third time, and proceeded once more to tuck his fiddle under his chin. This time it was all changed: it was "The Three Tykes" that he chose to set dancing, with the usual absurd effect. Enough that the house barely managed to keep its seat, or to preserve the proprieties, so that even the ladies in the boxes wagged their fans and their heads with an effect that would have been ludicrous if there had been anyone sufficiently unmoved by the music to be able to observe his neighbours. When "The Three Tykes" ended their dance, the riot of applause was still more tremendous than before; but the Fiddler would no more, and lightly bowed his farewell.

The play held on its way, in spite of sundry interruptions at first on the part of the gods, who wished the Fiddler to be recalled yet again. It was nearing the end, when at last the Fiddler himself stole in again to the gallery box where Marged had been left alone all this while. He had donned his cloak again by this; and he sank down on a chair at the back of the box in a way that showed him extremely exhausted. Marged was still so far under the fascination of the stage that she wished to watch the play to the last

possible minute; but as the apotheosis of Captain Macheath approached, the Fiddler rose and said:

“Shall we go?”

He took her down by a steep back staircase to the door of a room, at which he paused and knocked. On hearing a summon within, he led Marged into the presence of a portly gentleman with a shining face and a red nose, and a pair of wonderfully sharp eyes.

“This is Miss Ffoulkes—the young lady who sings so well!”

The little man bowed affably, without rising from his seat.

“Well,” said he, “if the young lady will come to London, and we find ’er as good’s all that, M’siu, we may find ’er somethin’, eh, Miss Fox? Ask for me; ’t Drury Lane—see!” So saying, he bowed them out.

“There is the great Mr Day!” said the Fiddler, as they went on down the winding staircase; “you see, Mlle. Margarita, if you go to London, you will make fame! You sing far better than his Polly Peachum!”

This unexpected episode, following on the electrical appearance of the Fiddler before that



crowded house with such effect, might well seem to enlarge suddenly her whole horizon, and set her future to a different key.

When they stepped out into the street by a small door at the back of the theatre the stars were shining brightly overhead, and the air was frosty and thrice fine after the close air of the theatre. Marged's pulses beat to a higher time and tune than ordinary as she marched along by the Fiddler's side. There was elation in the mere thought of being the sole companion of one who a little while before was holding the house so entranced; she felt through his presence the intoxicating breath of Fame.

She spoke of his success, stammering impulsive praises. He laughed doubtfully in reply.

"Fate!" he said; looking up and nodding his head toward the stars: "'Tis they decide it all. You will sing, or not! you will live or die, you will love or hate me, as they have fated it. What matter? For one cannot die then: no, no! Life is all to come: *this is nothing!*"

Nothing? Poor Marged: it meant so much to her. But she was to remember these words at no distant date.

She dreamt to-night, in her strange bed, in

the fusty antiquated chamber over the corn-chandler's shop. A street lamp without cast a ghostly reflection of the window-blind upon the ceiling; it reminded her a little of the coach window in the mail coach as she fell asleep. The Fiddler (in his further pursuit of Fate) had gone to London with Polly Peachum and Lady Henrietta in the Carne Hall coach; so she dreamt! This affected her so much that when some late roysterer below awoke her suddenly, she found, on staring up again at the streaked pattern on the ceiling, that her cheeks were wet with tears.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

### THE LADY'S TRAGEDY.

WHILE it was still comparatively early next morning ; before Marged had half satisfied her curiosity about the house and the street, and the city beyond the street, in which she had spent the night ; a hackney coach drove up to the corn-chandler's private door, and looking out of window, she saw the Fiddler alight. He had come to say he could not, as he greatly regretted, return to Carne with her that day as he had intended, for in consequence of last night's success Mr Day had engaged him to play the second night too. By way of atonement, he had hired this chariot to convey her to the mail coach, which started in an hour's time.

Marged, much dismayed and not a little disappointed, must needs admit the urgency of the case. She knew that his visit to Humbro' had something to do with his procuring a London engagement at Covent Garden or

Drury Lane, to play in the orchestra, if nothing better! There was nothing better under the circumstances, than for him to stay, and for Marged (since she dared not spend another night away from Carne) to go home alone!

"*A demain!*" he whispered, bidding her good-bye through the stage coach window: "to-morrow I will come, and you, dear Margarita, will call at Madame's for a lesson; and then we will talk of everything!"

The excitement of last night and the theatre was still all-powerful over her; and an added glamour attached to the Fiddler since he was to stay behind and remain in touch with this magical other world where ordinary work-a-day troubles did not rule.

"Shall you—shall you be sure to come to-morrow?" she asked, with a falter in her voice.

"Oh, yes, I think!" He pressed a little white packet (it was only sweetmeats, alack!) into her hand at the last moment.

The coach had started before she could say thanks! She carried off a last impression of seeing him stand bowing from the pavement, amid the stream of bakers' boys and fresh-cheeked junior clerks who paused to

point him out, possibly recognising him from last night's performance, as they brushed by. How lightly he wore his fame; how full of fine fire were those deep eyes of his! He had reached that point in her consciousness when a face has gathered a sufficient number of accretions of sentiment, and of associations with interesting occasions, to be seen no longer as a thing physical, but as a thing ideal and spiritual. It is the point in an acquaintance-ship where the acquaintance becomes a friend, or a lover; where the commonest name becomes a symbol; where the mere lifting of a hat decides the fate of empires—of emotion!

All the way back the coach wheels played an accompaniment to an imaginary fiddle, and to the half-recollected airs of last night. Even Polly Peachum's accents, gay, giddy, mischievous or tender, seemed to be all directed in some mysterious way to the sentimental recollection of the Fiddler. Now that she had to travel alone, she realised how much she had relied upon his trivial courtesies and small attentions. In adjusting her cloak, in saving her from the elbows of fellow-travellers and such trifles of the road, he had shown an

unexpectedly ready wit and dexterous hand: for the which, alack, she had not been very grateful on her side. And now—now he would secure this London engagement, and go away and forget her; and another winter be sunning himself in Italy.

When at length her long journey was over, and she stepped at dusk out of the gig at Carne Quay, how dark and deserted the streets seemed, how they had dwindled since yesterday! She noticed, while she stood at the ferry-landing waiting for the boat, a bright light in young Andrer's boat-loft; all else was depressingly lightless and sombre. Across the river, the back windows of the "First and Last" were in darkness. When she reached the Inn itself, entering by the alley door, and looked in as she passed, hoping to have some greeting from her father, he looked up at her with a flushed and vacant expression that brought the blood to her face and made her hurry off upstairs as fast as she could go.

She was stopped on the second landing, outside the dragon's chamber, by the emergence of Betsy, who had a draggled and flurried air which there was no mistaking.

“Crikey!” she said, with conviction. “You’ll get it! She’s bin half wild at your gannin awaäy!”

Marged ran on up to her room, and there nervously considered the situation: her father——! she remembered it had often been so of late, though it had never struck her with the same effect till now: her stepmother lying in wait for her, in a rheumatism whose torturing led to endless bitterness. A sorry homecoming, after that glimpse of a gayer world, where people went to the play, wore silks and satins, carried perfumed fans, and passed the time pleasantly from one year’s end to another.

There was still worse to come, ere this dreadful evening was to pass. It was about eight o’clock, and she was receiving a third instalment of anathema from her step-mother—anathema which at last had come to something like a final statement.

“Ye dare answer me, ye hizzie, an’ I’ll have ye torded oot o’ the hoose! It’s ma hoose eftor aäl, an’ I winnot have lassies ’at run aboot the countra wi’ bad characters like yon Fiddlor, taking awaäy its good name!”

What reply, if any, Marged might have

found it is not needed to discover; she was called from the bedside by a cautious knock at the door. It was Betsy, who said her father wanted her at once downstairs.

She found him waiting her, to her surprise, on the landing below. His face had considerably sobered since she saw him last. His manner was excited, and the lighted candle which he held, shook in his hand as he led the way into the long room where her piano stood.

He closed the door behind them when they had entered the room.

"Where did you leave the Fiddler?" he asked. "Didn't he come home with you?"

"No," she said; and proceeded to explain why. She added that he had said he would return on the morrow.

"H'sh!" her father held up his hand to stay her; "that," he said, "is what we need know nothing about. If they ask ye, Marged, when you come downstairs, you can say what he *did* do, but say nothing of what you think he's *going* to do. Else, ye'll get him into trouble. Murder's been done; and the fools think he is in it, and will do a mischief if we



don't keep him out of their clutches. Keep a clever tongue, Meg, then; yes indeed!"

"But ——?" she began, in amaze.

He grafted on her terrified ear, in reply, a slip from a dark tale which Mistor Foster had brought with startling effect to the Inn only a few moments before. Then, very much the usual chorus was enjoying itself in very much the usual way in the back room, little hoping for anything so good as a sensation; when Foster entered.

"Hello, Foster, man!" such was the refrain as he entered; "how are ye the night?"

"Oh, canny," was Mistor Foster's common response; but to-night he puffed and blew with an importance that was, so to speak, extra-personal. He did not take up, either, his accustomed seat in the corner, but paused in the middle of the room, inclining his head a little on one side to avoid contact with the hanging ship lamp that lighted the place.

"Lads!" he said at last, with a sensational snort, and a lifting of the arms as if he were too much encumbered by his coat or by circumstances. "Lads, ää'm fair bet for words to tell ye, hinnies, an' ää'm oot o' breath.

Listen: MORDER! ay, that's it. My Lady's been mordered in the sands yonder, north of Carne Ha'! Ay, lads, she has that!"

"Whaät,—me Lady?" said one. "Why, his Lordshup only came back to the Hall the daäy afore yestorday!"

"In the sands?" said another; "why, what was the poor fond Lady daein' in the sands?"

"Whae's done it?" asked a third, more succinctly.

"Give the poor man some Jamaica!" here interposed the Innkeeper, whose one instinct in the matter was, at all costs, to try and maintain the festive character of the entertainment; the more because, for reasons already hinted at, he was not quite himself this evening.

Mistor Fostor sent the rum down at a draught; but he paid no attention to the wink that flitted over one or two eyes in the room. Evidently he was in deadly earnest.

"Whae's done't?" he echoed. "That's not for me to say doonricht; his Lordshup's in the toon, seein' his laäyers doon by the Moot Ha'. But they're telling, there was a black tyke sittin' on his hunkers aside the poor mordered lady's corp when they foond it, an' aäl ——"

His commentary on this item could not have failed to be edifying; but it was cut short. A step was heard; then a sudden peremptory knocking, as with the stock of a riding-whip, on the glass of the Innkeeper's private retreat. This knock had a disturbing effect on the company, whose nerves had been stripped bare, as it were, by the news just arrived. The knock was, in turn, followed by a voice, and not such a voice as these walls were accustomed to hear.

"Fox!" it said; that was all.

"That's his Lordshup's voice!" said Three-Quarter Willim. "I'd could know it oot of a thousand!"

Captain Ffoulkes, hastily pulling himself together, and collecting his wits, threw open the glass slide of the bar, saw there a smart little man in an enormous Newmarket coat, peering in from the passage, with a reddish face, at once jovial and fox-like. Thereupon he opened the door of his den, and my Lord, for it really was he, motioned him to come out and shut it after him.

"A room — where we shan't be disturbed — and a word with ye, Fox. And, hark ye,"

for the Innkeeper was returning for a light to lead the way upstairs—no room being available below—“a stiff tumbler of brandy too, Fox, for 'tis cold,—devilish cold!”

In the issue, the Innkeeper, having ushered his noble guest into the small drawing-room on the first floor, and supplied lights and liquors, had to undergo there a quite casual cross-examination as to his daughter and the movements of the vanished Fiddler. And then my Lord went on to ask to see the girl herself; but he had to wait some ten minutes after he had made the requisition, ere, having had her father's advice and hastily changed her frock, Marged appeared before him. Meanwhile, my Lord sat sipping his brandy and drumming on the table.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

MY LORD.

“ O have ye na heard o’ the canny Lord Carne? ”  
*Old Song.*

WHEN Marged was ushered into the small drawing-room, she found facing her,—sitting by two tall candles at the round table, and tattooing on it lightly with his ungloved hands,—a complacent little gentleman; an ivory frigate and a stuffed lizard serving for background. His blue eyes twinkled briskly above a truly noble nose, while his maxillaries fell away meanly enough beneath, with a marked mobility of the lower one; which gave him a fox-like air. But his eyes puzzled her, and recalled another and nobler and more familiar face to her at fitful moments: Andrer Foster’s.

“ Hey,” he looked at her, his head slightly on one side, as she entered, “ this your daughter, Fox? Egad!” he added in an aside, “ this rascally Fiddler has some taste.

Come and stand here, my dear! What's your name? I'm a trifle deaf, so speak out!"

"Marged!" flushing her shyest red, she told him her name.

"Margaret!" he echoed, "a very pretty name. It stands for Pearl in Greek—Pearl, for I haven't forgotten that; my aunt, Lady Pavier, was a Margaret; and she gave me a spade guinea for finding that out. Well, now, I don't want to frighten you with my questions. Gad, you Fox, what's got my brandy? Go and get me another tumbler, and keep your own counsel, d'ye see?"

The Innkeeper hurried off, anxious to lose nothing of the cross-examination.

"Well, my dear: so you ran away, and a very naughty thing to do! specially with a dark beau of queer character, eh?"

Her flush died into a frightened pallor. But the pallor only served to make more luminous her black eyes, more sombre the waves of black hair above her forehead. She nervously rested one hand a moment upon the edge of the table; and while she did so, a singular thing happened. My Lord, when he ended his tattooing, had taken to turning a ring of

twisted gold round and round upon his little finger; and finally, in trying to spin it on the table, had set it rolling over towards Marged's hand. She was obliged to arrest its flight; and she caught it shyly and was handing it back very prettily, when she felt her hand suddenly seized and the ring slipped over her third finger.

This whimsical action on my Lord's part frightened her still more, and she was relieved to hear her father's step outside on the stairs. The ring hung so loosely on her finger that she had no difficulty in disengaging it, and putting it down lightly by its owner's side ere the Innkeeper entered.

"Well," resumed her cross-examiner, making another attempt at ring-spinning, "d'ye think this black beau of yours has run off in fear of his life?"

"Oh no, no!" she was growing more and more perplexed, and afraid. The incident of the ring had made her wonder for a second if there was not some mistake, and if the poor lady had really met her death? My Lord was so carelessly at ease with himself and his circumstances—surely the whole thing must be

some farce, like the Beggars' Comedy of last night?

"You went to Humbro'."

"Yes, my Lord!"

"Now, my dear, ye musn't mind telling us where ye spent the night?"

"At the play!" said Marged innocently.

"Oh yes, yes: but after that?"

"I stayed at Mistress Robson's in the High Street?"

"Egad, you did! What became of your beau?"

"He stayed at the inn—the 'Chequers,' my Lord!"

"Marged's a good girl, me Lord!" here put in Ffoulkes.

"Hold your tongue, Fox; what did he do next day?"

"I think he was going to see Mr Day."

"Day—Day? Can that be Day of Drury Lane?"

"It is the great Mr Day!" she said simply.

"Oh ho! the great Mr Day," he slightly mimicked her accents; "I suppose Mounzeer wants to fiddle at Drury Lane? What a pretty rogue it is! Did he take his black dog to



see Mr Day?" he concluded, rubbing his chin facetiously, taking out his watch, yawning portentously, and rising as if to go. "Gad, there's nothing in it, Fox!" he said adjusting the capes and collar of his great coat above his ruffled shirt. "And I don't want a fuss made! As for you, my pretty Pearl—suppose ye come up to the Hall after the funeral, and see my daughter — Henrietta? She will want just such a black-eyed puss as you for a maid."

So saying, yawning again, the noble little gentleman tripped off downstairs, humming softly to himself. Quickly as he went, he was not so quick but that three heads popped out of the back-room door, and gazed after him. One of these, I regret to say, was Three-Quarter Willim, whose dignity did not hinder the fair play of his curiosity at such times.

"Well, well, hinnies! sure enough!" cried out three voices almost simultaneously.

"I'm sorry for Cap'n Fox!" the Verger was beginning, when they heard his step in turn on the stairs, descending.

Unfortunately the Verger had so trained and modulated a voice from his practice at

church, that it carried only too well. Captain Ffoulkes had overheard.

"There's nothing to be sorry for!" he called out to the company as he installed himself again in his usual place.

"'Tis a sad mattor for his Lordshup!" said Captain Tom, who did not usually speak on general topics.

"I'm sorry for his Lordshup!" said the Verger in precisely the same sing-song that he had used in saying the same thing of his host. It was, in fact, a disingenuous attempt to pass off the second observation for the original one.

"Ye needn't be sorry for anyone save my Lady, who is dead!" said Ffoulkes, whose wits were recovering; "and even she's better off, to my fancy, as she is!"

"Ay, ay, that's sartainly so!" here interposed Three-Quarter Willim, who had been waiting his opportunity; "whae can quest'n that his gracious Majesty himsel' wadna be bettor off if his dotty heid were safe asleep? Whaät had his Lordshup to say, Cap'n?" he appended the latter clause hastily, lest someone else should intervene.

"He asked me to respect what he did say,

but seeing as ye are all steady old standards, I don't mind telling you what it come to."

"Whaät's that, Cap'n?" said Captain Tom.

"A warrant for a dark man we knaä on, eh?" asked Mistor Fostor.

"Eh, eh—whaät, whaät?"

A whole volley of interrogative grunts and sighs of curiosity signified the interest with which the Innkeeper's revelations were being awaited.

He made the most of the opportunity: and went about very deliberately to open a case bottle of his Dieppe brandy ere he opened his mouth.

"His Lordship has his suspicions; I have mine; you have yours. But 'tis a black business laying a murder to a man; and when's Lordship is in doubts, and he knowing the whole trigmejig—then I'm not going to jump off a shaky barrel!"

"Ower much cawshin killed the coo!" said Captain Tom.

"Ay, begox! whaät about the black tyke?" asked Mistor Fostor.

"Ay, the black tyke's a teasor!" said an echo.

The policy of caution was clearly not in favour.

“Whaät dis his Lordshup say to the tyke, that’s whaät I waänt to larn?” it was Three-Quarter Willim who spoke now: “I heard ye fessin Miss Fox intiv him: now, if he had nae sixpicons whaät did he want wi’ the canny lass?”

“We aäl understand yor wanting to shield yor daughter, and we winnot say nowt about hor gannin awaäy wi’ yon mord—Fiddlor!” so said a too impetuous critic—Captain Tom again for a wonder!

This implication provoked Captain Ffoulkes, who had at bottom certain peppery possibilities.

“Looksy here! Captain Tom Robson, I’m skiddled if I’ll swaller any preachments from any one in this house. My girl stayed at your late brother John the corn-chandler’s at Humbro’, and I never heard till now that *he* kept a gay house. For the rest, ’tis a damned funny thing if a maid can’t travel by His Majesty’s mail without losing her character. Yes indeed now! *Duw canwyll!* you’re a nice tidy man to be holding up your hand that rope’s-ended Peter Reed’s lad into his gra—!”

Captain Tom's reply was to get up and march out with much dignity—a dignity not lessened by the fact that his opponent's half-completed charge was based on actual occurrence. But the company felt it was unfair to rake up a ten-year-old misdemeanour of so trifling a kind, and if it had not been for their anxiety to hear more of his Lordship's view of the murder, Three-Quarter Willim would probably have made a public protest against this breach of the amenities of debate. As it was, he temporised :

“Well, Cap'n,” said he, in an urbanely judicial voice, spitting out several successive imaginary straws, “morder is morder, jestice is jestice, and a black tyke is evidence under the law! An' if the ownor of the tyke cuts his stick—morder being done—why, then ää say, why, then ää say—” and here Three-Quarter Willim rose to his feet in his eagerness: “cop him, and keep him! cop him, and keep him! till he can be brought to jury-law as a morderor!”

This speech roused great assent. Captain Ffoulkes attempted to raise side issues, in vain; and even hinted that his Lordship had

another clue, and another man in his eye. It was of no avail.

“If so be his Lordshup wants to keep it dark, as is nat’rall, seein’ his lady was oot of her wits, poor woman, it behoves us aäl to see that the law has its lay, an’ the morderor is traped!”

This was Mistor Foster’s opinion. Three-Quarter Willim’s was even more practically turned.

“I’m away to lay an information this varry minute, I am that,” he said; “and it will go hard if we dinna take the black-a-vist devil ere mony hoors is gone by!”

Even as he spoke, he drained his glass, putting his pipe away with an air of responsibility. Five minutes later, and the “First and Last” was deserted.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

### A WHIP AND A RING.

“ And I will drop my riding whip,  
And wed you wi’ a ring !”

*Tom of Hartwick.*

WHEN the chorus of law-maintainers had gone its way, a gardener from Carne Hall, Tim Trattles, who had encountered his master by chance over the water, called to ask for my Lord’s riding whip, which he thought had been left at the Inn. And Tim Trattles had the full story of my Lady’s death, and retailed it with unction.

Some two and a-half miles to the north of Carne Hall, there ensued a stretch of sand-dunes, not unlike the stretch that lay between Carne Quay and the Hall on the other side. These dunes formed a belt between the sea and the high road running north—a belt which, while it was full of change within its own limits, had kept those limits unaltered

from time immemorial, and would probably still keep them so to the end of time.

In the midst of this northward belt, there was, however, one hollow remarkable by its profound depth and conformation, as well as by the fact that it never changed its local position, whatever might happen to the neighbouring sand hills and hollows. This was known to the few natives who had ever happened to see or hear about it as the Silver-pit.

The tradition was that any one who got into it would never get out alive. Its sides were composed of loose sliding sand, quite steep enough to prevent any but the most nimble from scrambling out. This explains the trapping of its original victim—a Spanish pirate, it was said! The poor wretch's ship was stranded on this lonely shore, and he, the sole survivor, buried a fabulous amount of silver in the clay at the bottom, and was left so exhausted by his digging that he was unable to escape afterwards, and perished miserably in the pit.

Yesterday afternoon, according to Tim Trattles, Michael Watson, the innkeeper of Redheugh, had been out shooting gulls, and heard a dog howl mournfully in the sand



hills. Fancying it meant something out of the common, he clambered about looking for some sign of life, and was just about to give up the search as it was getting dusk when he chanced on the edge of the ill-favoured Silver-pit

“Ma heart, Cap’n, ye may think on Michael’s feelins,” said Tim with a gruesome unction, “an’ him trimbling at the best o’ times wi’ that strang smuggled brandy he is always drinking, when he looks doon yon awful Silvor-pit, an’ the sands turnin’ dark, and sees a black tyke settin’ by a deid ladie—her lang yaller hair an’ her silkie gown aäl ravelled about her, and her face just droondead in the sand!”

“No murder in that!” said Captain Ffoulkes. “I wonder you all haven’t more sense! It’s clear as the compass: the poor thing slipped in; and once in, out she couldn’t get.”

“Ay? what about the tyke?”

“What’s to keep a stray tyke, ye ninny-hammer, from smelling out a dead body?”

“But they say it belongs yon Fiddlor? He’s been seen gannin’ about wi’ the beast!”

“Poof, Tim, man, that’s nothing. What I want to hear is how came my Lady to be wandering in yon sands?”

“Well, some o’ the sarvants at the Ha’ are sayin’, when his Lordshup came home three days back, she got a start at seein’ him, and fair ran oot o’ the hoose. Ye know she has always been fleyed on him sin’ yon time he flicked her eye oot wi’ his ridin’ whip?”

“I’ll tell you, Tim; the quieter the whole business is kept, the better for his Lordship! There’s no question of the Fiddler; and them that tries to burn him, may burn a hole in his Lordship’s coat, ere they are through with it!’

“Well, Cap’n, get me the whip, an’ aä’ll be makkin’ hame!”

“Marged, run and see for the whip!”

She went up to the small room where she had undergone the recent examination, but there was no whip to be seen. On returning to say so, her father exclaimed upon the blindness of some eyes, and went off to look for the missing whip himself.

As soon as he had left the room, Tim made a sign to Marged, pointing toward the door with one hand, fumbling with the other in his pocket. He produced a tiny object of some kind wrapped in paper,—a piece of a dirty envelope.

“Here!” he said, muffling his hoarse voice to a husky whisper, “his Lordshup asked me to give ye this, honey! An’ he says ye are to send your friend to the Hartwick Inn the morrow, and he’ll be took care of, and if ye’re in ony trouble ye maun send my Lord this, any time!”

“Send him this?” she said, gazing on the man’s nodding head and grimacing features.

“Whisht! I hear the Cap’n comin’!” and putting the bit of paper into her hand, Tim marched heavily out into the passage, pulling the door to behind him.

“Ha’ ye found it, Cap’n?” he asked the Innkeeper, stolidly.

“No whip there, Tim, my man! His Lordship must have left it somewhere else!”

At this, Tim Trattles marches off; but it is noteworthy that he made no particular effort to look for the lost whip anywhere else.

When she had opened the roll of paper, Marged found in it the same ring of twisted gold that she had already had on her third finger. Her first impulse was to tell her father, but she hesitated; and when he came in, all she said was, as she slipped the ring into her pocket—

“Father, d’you think they’ll prison the Fiddler?”

“As likely as not, girl,—how can I tell?”

Her face fell as she said good-night. When she reached her room she sat on her bed for a long time looking at the ring very dubiously. It made her more and more uncomfortable the more she considered it; but when she thought of dropping it out of the window, or returning downstairs and popping it into the fire, some instinct of concern for the Fiddler’s fate warned her not. Upon this very ring, as she realised in the hours of sleepless devices on his behalf that followed, depended his fate.

On the morrow she was awake early, but on going downstairs, she found her father already there, booted and hatted, ready for going out.

“Marged,” he said on seeing her, “I’m going to see Mossoo Tegner. They are going to stop the Fiddler at Stirrelport, on his way back this afternoon. And if the officers should come while I’m gone, and ask questions, ye can just say what ye like. They have found out he’s coming back from Humbro’ to-day.”

She fell into a white fright, as the situation fully spread itself out. She knew the feeling

in the place about the Fiddler. Only the other day a man had been hung for murder in Wear-dale, and afterwards it had come out it was on a perjurer's testimony. What was to prevent the same thing happening again here, unless Lord Carne, or somebody as powerful, should try to save him? She fumbled the ring he had sent by Tim Trattles. What did it mean? What ought she to do? Ought she to go and see him? A new idea came to her as she imbibed some tea by the kitchen fire; she would go and ask young Andrer!

No sooner had she come to this decision than she was called to other things by an early customer, to whose wants she must attend, her father being out, and Betsy upstairs.

The early customer was Matther Dunn. He wanted a glass of whiskey to defend him from the chill of the morning, bringing in with him a fine whiff of raw frosty air.

"Are ye going over the water?" she asked, in as diffident a tone as she could command.

"I'm waitin' for Johnny Sands; he's lang the morn, canny man! He took a sup over much to cure a toothwark he has, last night!"

"Ye'll be kept very busy with this——"

“Busy?—it’s nae word for it! Me and Johnny is kept goin’ frae early morn to last thing at night. But I have nae call to be talkin’ wi’ ye, Miss Fox. They’ll likelies be sending for you as a witness, when’s browt before the bench i’ the morra morn.”

She trembled inwardly, but said—

“They haven’t had the ’quest yet, Matther!”

“Ten the morn! me and Johnny is goin’ there now! His Lordship, it seems, disna want ony but Mike and the doctor to be called. There’s nae doubt, her Ledyship had a nasty bat on the head before she was hyked into yon pit. Someone will hev to swing for it, else they’ll be blamin’ hus,—me and Johnny, and the law of England!”

“Is the ’quest at the Hall?”

“Oh, ay!”

“And ye are bound there now?”

“Wasn’t aä tellin’ ye?”

“You are a very clever hand at all such dark matters, they say, aren’t you, Matther?”

“Well, Miss Fox, I winnot but saäy I have foxed out a thing or two in ma time: ye’ve heard o’ the way aä trapted little Cantie Joe?”

She had not heard of this instance of

Matthew's subtlety, but she contrived a little laugh at the supposed recollection.

"I wonder, Matther, if ye could advise me about something—something very puzzling, before—before Johnny Sands comes?"

"Sweetheorts, I reckon!"

"Nothing so silly! Something very serious!"

"Well, gie us another glass toddy, and fire away!"

"Oh, Matther! it has to do with my Lady's death, and I'm afraid——"

"I'm bound to tell ye, Miss Fox, 'at onything ye tell to me about yon Fiddlor may be tordned to King's evidence again him; and I'm bound to saäy, secondlies, 'at I have, parsonally speaking, nae likin' for his black visnomy; and thordly——"

"It has nothing to do with him, Matther!"

"Well, fire awaäy, ye needna be feard; ye can just talk tae me the self and same as if I was ony common body!" Matthew coughed a cough like an Oyez! of the courts; and settled himself, with imposing movements of his elbows, in the settle by the fire. He sat there, facing the bar, within which Marged stood, something like a prisoner at the bar of justice.

Unluckily for the formality with which he had contrived to invest the episode, Marged now spoilt the effect by lifting a hinged lid that covered an opening in the counter, and stepping over without ceremony to the settle.

"See!" she said, with an air of confidential secrecy, infinitely flattering to the self-esteem of this would-be justice of the peace.

Between her pretty finger and thumb, held up in the gleam of the fire, was a ring.

Matther forgot his dignities. "How, how!" he exclaimed, in the natural tone of a foolishly curious man: "whaät's this ye've gettin'?"

"H'sh!" she looked all round to make sure they were safe from any third person's interruption, and then her glance fell irresistibly upon her victim.

The fire was warm after the raw airs without; the whiskey was toothsome; and Marged—Marged looked coy, and maidishly pretty, in the firelight! Matther felt himself for a moment a young man again.

"Sit ye down here!" he said, in a voice of preposterous good-will, not to say gallantry; "sit ye down, honey!"



Instead of sitting down, she proffered him the ring.

“Last night,” she said in her loudest whisper, so that she should not have to approach the listener too near, “last night, a man that I could tell if I saw him again, came to the Inn, and gave me this; and he said—he said—I wonder if it’s right to tell you, Matther?”

“Varry right, I’m the wonly man could——”

“He said—if I would take this to his Lordship to-day (for it was my Lady’s ring), he would know the man that sent it had strange evidence to give, and would arrange for some-one to meet him at the *appointed place*, this afternoon, at three o’clock! Now I know you are a safe man, Matther; and there’s none else I can trust! Take the ring, and give it to my Lord in strict private—’sh! I hear a step coming! Johnny Sands? If it is, not a word! He’s not like you, Matther—quick! take it! The *appointed place*! remember, at *three!*”

“The ’pointed plaâce?” he gasped. “What place?”

“Only my Lord knows that,” she said, returning to her post behind the counter.

When Johnny Sands entered, he wondered at the enormously increased importance of his fellow-officer's bearing, but otherwise detected no sign of state secrets in the situation. The two heroes left the Inn together a few minutes later, carrying themselves with a very noticeable air of legal valour and despatch, and hied them so over the ferry.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

LOVE AND FATE.

*Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.*

WHEN her father returned presently, Marged asked him what was the result of his visit to the Tegnors.

“Bad, very bad!” he said curtly; “the poor creatures are off their heads with coffee, and crying for their dear Mossoo!”

Thereupon she told him her scheme; to despatch some trusty messenger, Andrer if possible, across country on horseback, to intercept the Fiddler ere he arrived at Stirrelport, on his way back. Then to have a gig in waiting to convey him from some possible point to the Hartwick Inn, where my Lord himself would take the fugitive in charge.

To convince her father, she had to tell him now about the ring, and the little plot she had made to turn on it.

After some natural demur over probable

difficulties, he agreed to her going off forthwith to see Andrer Fostor.

She found him working by candlelight in his boat-loft, for it was a dark morning. A can of smoking coffee stood by his side, showing that he had not intermitted his work even to go into the house for breakfast. When he looked round on her entrance, his face was, she thought, anxiously full of some overweighting burden of anxiety, some taxing and all but invincible task.

“Marged?” as he spoke, his voice had the inflection of an absent mind.

“Andrer,” she said in her turn, and an involuntary depression crept into her voice as she scanned his face: “O Andrer, I want you to help me!”

He took up a long gimlet, and began to bore into a piece of hard wood with much vim, as if he did not want to be interrupted.

“Andrer,” she said again, but he only increased the vigour of his hand on the gimlet, as she went on with the same refrain—“Oh, I want you to help me!”

A third time then she began, more plaintively, going to him, and putting her hand on his arm ;

but this time she ended—"I want you to save a drowning man!"

He started, poising the gimlet, and stared at her.

"Haven't you heard," she said, "about my Lady Carne's death, and the rest?"

"Nothing!" he said, "I've heard nothing. They keep talking, talking, I don't hearken to them; I have my work to do—my boat to—but you said a man drowning! Seven men I lost; seven men I must save; or I'm damned, damned eternally. So the preacher said in the market-place, and they all heard him!" He drew his hand feverishly across his forehead, and she saw that beads of moisture had started on it.

"O Andrer, you can save one now," she cries, bursting into the story that we know, and that did not lose in her telling.

She stood quite close to him as she told it, with growing feeling that now made her eyes tremble, now made her eyes glisten with the luminous sable gleams that he had found of subtle effect before now. She ended:

"If you do not save him, he is lost, he is surely lost!"

He threw down the gimlet, and a weight of care fell visibly from his face.

"Margret, I will!" he said, half to himself, reflectively.

But when they fell to discussing ways and means, she chanced to rouse an outburst from him. They had touched on the possibility of the Fiddler's being yet, in spite of all their efforts, taken, and done to death.

"Not that he would mind!" she said, rather foolishly, "it's all Fate, he says: life or death! love or hate!"

"Oh!" cries Andrer at this, passionately, "it's not Fate, but men's fault, if men are lost! not Fate; 'twas me killed Riley and them! And oh, Margret, if I love you, and save this one, I do it against Fate. And if he makes light of Death, why, then, he's wrong. That moody tune that you sang me, and that I heard him fiddle, when I was lying in yon ball-room, turned my brain, I fancy, for now I hear it all the time: and when I hear it, I hear Riley cryin' out, and I'm afraid I'll be wiped out ere I have paid back that damning debt!"

He walked up and down, wringing his hands

in an agony as he said this, and then, ere she could put in a saving word, continued :

“O Margret, if you will but love me, I’ll can save this one and many a one when my boat is fair finished. Then I can die and care as little as any one. Die! it’s no death if you love me. No, no, no! to die with you’d be heaven forever, instead of this hell where Riley and them are crying against me night and day,—Murderer and Bastard! Murderer and Bastard!”

She hid her eyes with her hands at this terrible outburst, and cried out from under them: “Andrer,” she sobbed, “if ye will save him, I will—I will—love you forever!”

“I will save him!” he cried.

Their plan of action agreed upon now, she turned to go, afraid to trust herself to say more than was really necessary. She forbade him to accompany her out and down to the ferry-landing, both because he was, she saw, still over-excited, and because it was not well they should be seen together too openly at this juncture of events.

At the door she paused: “Mayn’t I see the boat?” she asked.

He shook his head. "Not now!" he said; "it will soon be finished, and then—then," he emphasised the second "then" by a kiss, after which she deftly slipped away, and he shook himself together, straightening his shoulders: while a more natural, almost boyish look, drove away the last lurking shadow of his disordered mind from his face.

As she rowed back, she even heard, or fancied she heard him singing in his artless baritone:

"As I came down the Sandgate, the Sandgate, the Sandgate,  
As I came down the Sandgate, I heard a lassie sing,—  
Weel may the keel row, the keel row, the keel row!  
Weel may the keel row, that my lad's in!"



## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-NINTH.

### THE FIDDLER'S RETURN.

“ Though the night be black as pitch and tar,  
I'll bring ye through them a' my dear !”  
*Ned Carr's Good Night.*

WHEN, early that fateful afternoon, the Fiddler looked out of the mail coach at Marley Cross, a village two miles out of Stirrelport, he was surprised to be accosted by a sailor-like young man, who stepped up briskly to his side in the first bustle of arrival, and handed him a note. It ran :

“ *First and Last,*  
*Friday.*”

*Dear Friend,*  
*You are in danger*  
*if you come back to Carne to-day.*  
*The bearer will explain all if you*  
*follow him to the “ George.”*

*Marged Ffoulkes.*

He found this communication entirely puzzling.

His temper, after his late triumphs at Humbro' Theatre Royal, was not one of deference to Carne and its local amenities; and no intimation of the events extraordinary of the last two days had reached him. Still, he trusted Marged, and if he found the alarm idle and made haste there would yet be time to reach Carne before nightfall. So, gathering his green bag carefully under his arm, after a momentary hesitation, he stepped out in pursuit of the messenger.

The sailor-like young man, for his part, seemed to have no doubt of the Fiddler's following him. He did not even glance round, but held on his way through the village street, and then up a long lane in its lower part. This brought them to a detached hostelry standing on the verge of a neglected horse-pond which distilled a mild steam in the frosty air. The house itself had an effect of being little frequented, though on the farther side of the pond stretched the broader space of a road, evidently leading to a colliery whose chimneys were just visible. Into the door of this uninviting retreat, on whose step a dirty urchin had just set up a squalling, for pure amusement

apparently, the Fiddler saw his guide disappear, and followed, sufficiently perplexed, and much disgusted at the adventure.

The sailor had entered a small parlour, off the passage of the inn, but stepped back to the door to make sure that the Fiddler was at hand. When they were both safely closeted, he went back yet a second time and dropped a half-penny into the squalling youngster's hand, with the result of a marked accession to the squalls given out, from which it might perhaps be inferred that the urchin was paid to make as much noise as possible. The Fiddler, for his part, more and more uneasy at being dragged so far out of his way, scanned his guide impatiently, failing to recognise in him one whom he had barely seen, indeed, save in the most casual way. However, he did not fail to find a certain re-assurance in the manner in which Andrer began.

“You see, Mounseer, 'tis this way! Matther and Johnny Sands, the constables, are waitin' to have ye on the road to Carne this very minute!”

The Fiddler put down his green bag on the table, and looked puzzled. “But——” he began.

“Have you not heard what they’re saying? that you had a hand in the death of my Lady Carne?”

“Miladi?” murmured the Fiddler astounded; “I have heard of nothing!”

Andrer told him in brief the story, and the suspicion based on the black dog that had been like to lead to his arrest.

“Captain Fox an’ them thought the best way would be for ye to take this road as far as Hartup; there’ll be a gig waitin’ ye at dark by the bit plantation this side o’ the village. This road runs straight as ye wish, save one turn to the right for Carne, about five mile from this. An’ ye’d better let me take the fiddle for you!”

The Fiddler cast a dismayed look at the green bag.

“No, no!” he cried. He could not bear to part with it.

At this pass, wheels were heard outside, Andrer looked apprehensively out of the small window. It was merely two casual wayfarers, chilled by the drive through the frost, who were pausing for a glass of whiskey. But their advent was enough to alarm Andrer, who sneaked the door of the room, in case they

should think of entering it. They passed on to the back regions of the inn, as it was; but still his fears made him nervous. The urchin in the doorway, interested by the horse and trap without, had ceased his howling;—Andrer opened, and pounced upon him with another half-penny:

“Howl, ye little divil, howl!” he urged in a terrible whisper, and the howling recommenced.

“They’ll ken ye by the fiddle, as sure as a sojer by his red coat!” he said then; “ye’d better let me take it!”

The Fiddler shrugged his shoulders disconsolately. He had seated himself on the edge of the table which took up a large part of the narrow floor of the room; one of his hands rested lightly on the green bag, and the other, the left, fingered an imaginary fiddle, as he looked from Andrer to the window and the grey elements visible through its dirty panes.

“But no, no, no!” he murmured; “but I must—I must have one tune, oh, I must!”

He seized the green bag, and drew forth the precious instrument of fate. His companion looked round in alarm.

“Man,” he cries, “would ye like to be hung?”

“It is matter ver’ little. What can I do? I must play this one again. If the time is come, then we will die!”

“No more fiddling——”

Andrer meant there would be none in the world to come, presumably. The Fiddler understood it as a contrary command, referring to his present intention. He began, thereupon, to screw up his strings with zealous haste, and drew one or two tentative melodious discords from them. His mentor made one more attempt.

“If ye are hung, there’s an end to all your tunes!” He shuddered, saying it.

The Fiddler’s reply was a strain, so sweet, so touched with something more than the poor possibilities of life in a dingy inn on a dreary December afternoon, that Andrer, for whom this fiddling had associations, held his tongue, and fell back upon his own private reflections.

These reflections, carrying him back to the state bedroom at Carne Hall, to Lady Henrietta, and to Marged, so filled his mind, that he omitted to notice the howls at the inn door had

stopped. He was quickly recalled to the present by a heavy step in the passage, followed by the opening of the door of the room. A portentously solid head and face looked in upon them. Andrer could have cried aloud; there was something horribly official in that blank gaze.

"Hello-a! whaät ha' we here?" said the head.

"We're just havin' a bit tune," replied Andrer, in a disinterested tone of voice.

"So I'm thinkin'," said the head.

The Fiddler went on playing with most tuneful effect, with an allurements, in fact, that a cat could not have resisted.

"'Tis a queeör thing," resumed the head at the first drop in the music, "ay, an' a varry queeör thing, but they are aäl, seemin'ly, in the way to—to the wrang place. Whae but me would ha' thowt o' lookin' in at the 'George?'"

So saying, the head introduced farther its appertaining shoulders, and then the rest of a substantial lower framework.

This uninvited guest shut the door in such a business-like way and with so much secretiveness, behind him, that Andrer thought it wise to wink knowingly at him.

"Aä thowt as much!" said the new-comer, by way of response.

"Sit ye down!" and "What'll ye take?" said Andrer then, with another wink, so directed as to be taken with equal intelligence by both his companions.

"Ay, aä thowt as much," said the new-comer again. "A drop o' Mistress Boyd's Scots will do me varry nicely."

Andrer went to the door and called out the order. When he had reseated himself:

"Hae ye been sworn in?" asked the head in an aside to him.

He shook his head.

"Like me," said the other. "I just gie them a bit help on speshil occasions."

"'Tis not often one has a chance of a tune by such a rare hand at it. We might have a jig, if ye're willin', Mistor!"

The latter clause was not addressed to the Fiddler; but forthwith such a magic manipulation of "The Three Tykes" began to titillate the ears of the listeners, that the face of the amateur officer of the peace first smiled and then his head began to nod in time from side to side.



"Hinnies how!" he remarked. "Hinnies how!"

But he did not forget his duties either; and, presently, he contrived to whisper Andrer, asking if the constables knew where he was.

"They stopped the coach just the other side of the Cross—just too late!" he added.

"I'm expecting them every other minute!" said Andrer.

The Fiddler went on fiddling as if his life depended on it, while Andrer desperately considered the situation. "The Three Tykes" was discoursed so irresistibly, with such compelling art, that the very high-road became aware of it. Soon the window of the room became darkened from without, and four or five heads of dusky colliers, returning home from the pit, were thrust into its panes. Another moment, and they had burst into the house and thrown open the door of the room itself. Andrer passed a shrewd glance to the amateur constable, who shook his head in a melancholy corroboration of the dangers attaching to the law's delays.

This head-shaking irritated the leader of the colliers—a hero with the head and shoulders of a Vulcan and the legs of a dwarf.

“Smash, man!” he cries through his coal-dust. “Wad ye wag yor fond heed at hus? Hus was never kept oot o’ the Geohrge yet, for ony bagman. Heor, you, Mistor Fiddlor!” and he seized the unfortunate Fiddler by the arm; “come your ways into the kitcher, an’ ye shall ha’ a quart to yoursel’, an’ we’ll send the hat roond, an’ it’ll pay ye bettor than fiddlin’ to these broodie bantams!”

At this, Andrer rose up and eyed the collier.

“Look here, mate,” he cries in turn, “we’re no bagmen; him an’ me’s on the King’s service,” indicating the amateur constable; “but we’ve no dislike to turning into the kitchen, if ye’ll see to keepin’ the doors.”

“That’s fair eneugh!” cries Vulcan, turning back into the passage.

“Is there a back way out of the house?” Andrer asked his fellow-constable the minute they were left to themselves. “It’s growin’ dark! We’ll hae to smuggle our man out quietly as soon as they get a bit on.”

The other was delighted at so obvious a conspiracy. Yes, there was a back way out, which led into a footpath to the village.

"Now or never!" cries Andrer at this. "You know the place. Just ye go cannily out, an' make sure the coast is clear. Sing out an order for some ale for the kitchen as ye go by, to throw them off the scent, an' we'll be after you like a shot. The Fiddler's a dummy, ye ken, and doesn't understand what we're driving at!"

The head resumed its chimney-pot with alacrity at this and stole out with ludicrous stealth.

"Now," cries Andrer in the Fiddler's ear, "when I give the word, RUN!"

His look and gesture were so eloquent that even if the Fiddler had been twice deaf, he must have understood. They heard a voice call out:

"Bring twa quarrts o' yor best to the kitcher, Mistress Boyd!"

This was immediately capped by the more stentorian accents of one of the pitmen:

"Bring some candles, Mistress Boyd, hinnie!"

"Quick, man, run!" cries Andrer, touching the Fiddler's arm, and snatching up the bag.

The fiddle gave one last ominous squeal, as the pair of them sped out of the house by the

front, all but overturning another collier who was entering.

"It's the deil awa' wi' a sailor, begox!" he sang out, as the two disappeared on the dusky highway.

Two minutes later, and the "George" was in a ferment, and the disappointed colliers were giving the maintainer of the King's service a bit of their mind. That gentleman was unwise enough to recriminate, with the result that he presently re-took his road home with his beaver chimney-pot hat no longer resembling anything in particular, and with streaks of red and coal-dust on his mortified visage.

As for the fugitives, they ran something like a mile along the king's highway. Then, discovering they were not being pursued, they dropped into a brisk walk that lasted until they heard wheels in the distance behind them, when they climbed a hedge, and took shelter behind a stray stack.

It was all but dark, the wind was rising, and moaned and whistled about the sides of the haystack, and what Andrer at first thought to be chips and seeds of hay, soon proved to be dry flakes of snow. But the stack seemed

wonderfully warm, friendly and human, as they heard the vehicle rattle by. The Fiddler's emotions found voice as he turned thereupon to his rescuer.

"You have save me," he said, as Andrer now bethought him of the green bag, and handed it to him. "What can I—what s'all I say to you?"

Like most north-countrymen, Andrer hated to be thanked; but for once he profited by the chance thus offered.

"'Tis Miss Fox saved you," he said, "an' her ye may thank! And whatever may happen, O Mistor Fiddlor, mind ye do her no wrang! I ha' enough lives to answer for, without seeking to take yours!"

With this monition, pointing out once more the way the Fiddler was to take, he stole off across the darkening fields, southward.

## CHAPTER THE THIRTIETH.

### THE CHINESE PHEASANTS.

THE gig waited long by the plantation outside Hartup, but no one at all resembling the Fiddler arrived, and at length its driver, Tom Ellit, a ne'er-do-weel who had been well paid for the service, concluded they had trapped the fugitive, and drove home through as pretty a snowstorm, he declared, as he had ever seen. For a thunderless winter lightning, locally known as "bleezers," accompanied the snow.

It was between seven and eight o'clock, that Lord Carne, returning on horseback from his fool's errand to Hartwick in an ill-humour, half-blinded by the drive of the snow under his beaver brim, nearly rode over a tall wayfarer, walking in the same direction.

"Hallo, you sir!" he sang out.

The wayfarer looked round, and the long

pear-shaped face, as seen in the chance illumination of a bleazer, made the rider forget the ills of the road.

"Good Gad," he cried fervently, "'tis the very tip!"

The unfortunate Fiddler, in fact, had completely mistaken his way in the snow, and taken a by-road to the south, instead of continuing on as he had been instructed toward Hartup. Travelling thus in a circle he had succeeded in arriving at the gates of the very house where his supposed victim, and the unconscious cause of all his woes, was lying confined for her last sleep.

"Here's a pretty go!" said the other, "I thought to have had you (or your sweetheart) at Hartwick! You're Mossoo Nimico, ain't ye? Well, if you follow the road you're on now, it'll land you, Mossoo Nimico—it will land you in Carne Jail!"

Nimico was a name Henrietta had given him one day in a fit of spleen. The Fiddler gazed up at his questioner helplessly, and then, along the desolate road. The wind blew his long cloak about uncomfortably, having the better purchase of its flaps because of his

having put his green bag, with the fiddle inside, beneath it for safety.

“Gad, is the man dumb, as they say? What the deuce—look here!” he cries; “I have it! I’ll put him in the old gun-room. I’m damned if he shall be hung till he has let me hear him fiddle! The rather,” he added, “as he didn’t do’t!”

With this, my Lord puts his horse about, and calls out to the Fiddler, “*Allons vite!* come, Mossoo Nimico!”

About a hundred yards back from the point where they had encountered, there was a small wicket, admitting to Carne Park, rarely used save by a chance poacher. Here Lord Carne, having induced the Fiddler to follow him, dismounted and tied up his horse, and led the way into a grove of sea-stunted beeches. The trees moaned bitterly in the cruel wind, and in a deserted avenue of elms, hard by, the moan became a prolonged wail, the complaint of a hundred winter nights spent in the sea blast. Beneath the elms he paused to decide which way their route lay! The swirl of snow, the fast following of the wind, the perplexity of the darkness, gave urgency to such delibera-



tions. After a moment's hesitation, he impatiently plunged across a dry ditch, difficult to discover beneath the snow, that came near to giving the Fiddler a fall. Beyond this, a neglected lawn, and then a scrubby coppice led them to a slight hollow, and in the hollow a darker mass, dimly discernible, seemed to start up from the ground. It was a small building, built in unison with the lines of the Hall itself, a small dome capping it; at one end a classic doorway showed four marble columns. Anything less likely to inspire a houseless and hunted man with a sense of human warmth and hospitality one might hardly discover; anything less fitted to meet the exigencies of such a northern night of snow and wintry wind in such a bleak region as these surroundings. But the Fiddler was grateful for any shelter.

On one side of the doorway in the wall was a small hole, and into this the Fiddler saw his companion dip his fingers, and draw forth—a key! The key, after many and profane trials, opened the door. Within, the place had a stale air, but it did not strike cold; which was due to the offices of Lady Henrietta.

Once inside, the Fiddler could make out nothing, so absolute was the darkness, but he groped his way to a seat, and there perforce sat down, being unable to sustain himself longer on his weary legs. My Lord, for his part, exclaimed:

“It’s a poor crib, Mossoo Nimico! I’d be sorry to put a horse in it! But I’ll send you lights, and some grub and brandy, by Dilly! and I’ll pay you another visit. For I want to hear you fiddle!”

It is doubtful if the Fiddler understood all this speech; but he quite understood, on hearing the door close, that he was left alone. So he sat on, listening to the storm in a sort of cowed stupor without a sense of anything beyond the next black moment that brought a further sickness to his heart, and a further chill to his pulses.

He must have been sitting there for an hour and more, wondering at the occasional soft noises that he heard close to his seat—noises that might mean the soft ruffle of feathers or the nightly toilet of a mouse—when his ear caught another sound of approaching steps, and his eye caught a dancing gleam of yellow light.

It was my Lord himself,—still to the Fiddler merely a problematic little personage who had eccentric manners, and who had given him an uncertain shelter here, in an unknown place, for the night.

He was followed by a still smaller, still more whimsical creature, a sort of plagiarism of himself, who carried a basket and put it down on a word of command, staring hard at the Fiddler.

“What are ye staring at, stoopid?” asked my Lord, after he had given the Fiddler a friendly glance. “What the devil did ye expect to see?—a sea-cow? Off with ye, and not a word, as ye love you, about this. Shut the door, and off with ye!”

Dilly was my Lord’s inseparable groom, valet, confidential tout, and rascal-made-easy. If you had read all Dilly’s wrinkles in the light of the latest physiognomical science, they would have spelt—Newmarket!

The basket that Dilly had borne, when the Fiddler on my Lord’s invitation had opened it, was seen to hold an interesting square bottle and various comestibles—such as pigeon pie, and two or three roasted birds which

seemed to have shed a leg or a wing on the way; with some bread and cheese, and other appurtenances of a very sufficient supper.

As for the bottle, it contained cognac of a very soft and caressing temper; after a nip or two from which, the Fiddler made ado to eat up the whole provision by a kind of strategy, as it seemed, so rapidly and effortlessly did he bolt birds, pie, bread, and cheese.

During this process, my Lord, having also refreshed himself from the bottle by the simplest means, cast the light of the lantern into the recesses of the apartment where they sat, and made a "Clk, clk!" with his tongue. Instantly, there was a flurry and a flutter of feathers, which caused the Fiddler to turn his head in wonder. In the background, on a sort of roost let into a narrow alcove, sat four birds of the most amazing colours, whose plumage fairly flamed in the yellow twilight of the lantern.

The light frightened them, and they ruffled and turned about uncomfortably on their perches, beneath the scrutiny to which they were subjected. Finally, one of them fluttered to the ground and hid itself beneath a fixed seat that ran round one wall of the building.

Some vain attempts followed on the part of its tormentor to poke it out again; after which he set down the lantern, and, seating himself opposite the Fiddler, said :

“ And now, Mossoo Nimico, I should like to hear this fiddle that sets men and girls dancing, eh? ”

The poor Fiddler looked ruefully at his host, then down at his green bag, and began to murmur excuses about wet strings and the like!

“ Oh, hang the wet, ” said his lordship cheerfully; “ I ’ll forgive a chance squeak on the wrong side if ye ’ll only play ‘ The Three Tykes, ’ as ye did on St Andrew’s night! ”

He motioned with his head in the direction of the Hall, and the Fiddler on the moment divined that he was in the grounds of Carne Hall; for, with this, my Lord happened to pull off the glove from his left hand, and disclosed on its little finger the fateful ring of twisted gold, and on his third finger a diamond of remarkable brilliancy. Yes, now it became quite clear who it was! The Fiddler rose to his feet, with a profound bow :

“ I have not understand, my Lord! ” he pro-

tested, drawing out the fiddle from the green bag. "With the greatest pleasure!"

As he stood there, in the light of the lantern, which stood on the ground, its gleam cast a shadow in his eyepits, behind his nose, under his long chin nestling on the fiddle. His bowing arm sent at every longer stroke a black shadow that flitted over the ceiling, and blotted out the crimson and gold of the unhappy birds on their roost in the background.

Even the frolic rhythm of "The Three Tykes" took on to the fancy of the sole listener, under the circumstances, a kind of gruesome, uncanny effect, as if one should chance by night on a jig in a graveyard. His fancy began to wander off to uneasy recollections of his dead wife and the ill-favoured hole where her body was found; or still worse, to the look of pale horror on her face as she fled before him, that evening of his arrival, out into the darkness. Since then he had been sustaining his nerves with continual doses of brandy, and now they were beginning to give out. Each successive variation of "The Three Tykes," that the fiddle discoursed, pleased him less than the last.

"Damn the thing," he cried, as yet another

began with a kind of impish pizzicato, "hold on, Mossoo Nimico, hold on!" He added, softening his voice, "Gad, if ye don't take care, ye'll be fiddlin' the dead to life! I can't stand it, Nimico; play me a soft and soothing thing now! 'Home, Sweet Home,' or the 'Lass of Richmond Hill,' or the 'Bailiff's Daughter of Islington'!"

Thereupon the Fiddler, casting about, after some most tenderly-phrased preliminary chords, dropped into the air of "Bobby Shaftoe," most touching of old north-country airs, and made his fiddle to sigh and cry over it, as if Bobby Shaftoe were its sudden, and immediate, and original inspiration at the moment. It reminded the listener again of many things, and made that well whip-corded heart of his slip some of its knots, if rather out of pity for himself than for his dead wife or any one else.

"There, that'll do! I'm an unhappy man, Mossoo Nimico," he said, tearfully, when the last bars of "Bobby Shaftoe" had died away: "Lady Carne's gone, and save for a little girl in the 'Nelson Arms' at Newmarket, there's nobody cares what'd become of me, and she's fickle too, Dilly says!"

In thus expressing his emotions, the Master of Carne rose to his feet, and apparently caught sight so of the unhappy cock pheasant which was peering uneasily out of its hiding-place. At any rate, he made a sudden dart forward, and a series of violent lunges, with the result that the four birds, already frightened by the fiddling, were soon flying all over the place.

"Shoo!" cried their tormentor, excitedly, as he tried to pen them in their original corner, and then, finding his efforts unsuccessful, turned and threw open the door, and drove the unfortunate exotic creatures out into the snowy darkness.

"That'll teach Harry to keep her nasty cockatoos in my gun-room!" he cried, with a fillip in his tone, as of a naughty school-boy.

"And now, Mossoo Nimico, I must bid you good-night!" he said. "Whatever you do, don't get meandering about. To-morrow, while they are all at the funeral, I daresay we shall manage to keep you here—to get you out of this, I mean!"

The Fiddler made him one of his most accomplished bows, and at the same time, out



of his weariness, so prolonged by the present sitting, contrived to suppress a yawn.

"The thing will be," continued his Lordship, "to smuggle you on board some snug ship for France, or we might—what do you think of Newmarket for a change, Nimico? You'd make pockets full in one week at the next meeting, if I pulled the strings, eh? If it weren't so risky, I'm hanged if I wouldn't keep you here till I go back!"

The Fiddler bowed again, still more suavely, and stretching out his left arm, looked at the curved back of his hand, a trick that he had.

"Make yourself as snug as you can," said his host, going at last, greatly to the Fiddler's relief; "I'll send Dilly in the morning!" With this parting promise, my Lord disappeared nimbly into the night.

## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIRST.

### THE BLUE HOUSE.

“ In this year the old Blue House was demolished.”  
*Records of Carné Quay (1835).*

ON the following morning, Lady Henrietta, rising late, as her custom was, and looking out of the window, sighed to see the white waste of snow to the north of the Hall, only terminated by the funereal lines of stunted elms. But her sighs were quickly turned into a prolonged “Why?” of surprise, on her catching a glimpse of something unusual in the midst of one of the white lawns, not a hundred yards away.

It was a crimson and gold object, that looked at the distance from which she viewed it, amid the white setting of the snow, like some extraordinary Oriental sash or turban. So, at least, she thought at a first glimpse. At a second, she raised a shrill scream that brought Philippa in from her bedroom adjoining, murmuring as she entered :

"The whole house is going out of its mind like dear Mamma, I suppose! Whatever are you screaming for, Henrietta?"

"Oh, my poor birds, my Chinese pheasants—see, there in the snow! Oh, I'm heart-broken!"

"You'll get over it!" said Philippa phlegmatically. "You always do. Besides," she added, "I daresay they are none the worse; send Susan after them!"

As a result of this colloquy, the harmless, necessary Susan was despatched to the old gun-room where the pheasants had lived, most uncomfortably if the truth were told, till last night. Susan tripped off through the snow nimbly enough, humming beneath the grey woollen shawl she had wrapped round her mouth, a rather naughty ditty about love and its mischiefs. She returned to the house at such a swiftness that her feet barely touched the ground, while her mouth now emitted one long sustained scream, only once or twice interrupted by an invocation of a strictly devotional character.

So screaming, her shawl flying wide, her hands reaching out as if for the first helping hand available, she encountered Lady Henri-

etta just within the side door at which she entered, and in her affright actually seized her mistress by the hand.

"Gracious, Susan," said Henrietta, detaching her hand, "what silliness is this? One would think you had seen the Devil himself!"

"So I did, so I did, so I did," sobbed Susan hysterically. "There he was, when I lifted the sneck, lookin' at me!"

"You're a little fool," said Henrietta, "send Abel here!" When Abel came, however, he was in an ill-humour, and said he did not like the idea of displeasing the Devil! Eventually Dilly earned a reputation by taking up the mission to visit the gun-room. The whole household, from kitchen to stable, was fairly demoralised, while my Lady's body still lay unburied in the house, and every rat's squeak led to hysterics.

When Dilly arrived at the gun-room, he found the door which Susan said she had left open behind her in her fright, fast closed. He knocked and knocked again, but without response. The Fiddler, after a more or less sleepless night, only passed in anything like toleration by reason of the bottle left him by

his host, which failed quite to warm his frozen nerves in the morning, was in no position to receive with philosophy such a visitor as Susan. Tired out, wretched for want of sleep, overtaken by continual fears, he saw but one possibility open to him after Susan's sudden appearance and disappearance—Flight.

Gathering up once more his green bag, he had sped off across the snowy lawns and through the frozen coppices toward the seashore, ere Susan had fairly reached the house.

The sands reached in safety, he looked up and down their long reach, to north and south, and decided upon the stretch to the south. This led him on toward the hostile circle of Carne, within which, once he had set his foot, he was a lost man. But he probably imagined he was taking the safest route open to him.

He wandered on for a mile or two until, seeing some figure approaching in the far distance, he took to the sand-dunes, in which he spent most part of that terrible day of iron skies and black frost. Towards nightfall, a woman, a small farmer's wife, whose husband had gone to Carne Quay with a load of potatoes, was startled to see a tall dark man, in a long cloak,

with some dubious bundle beneath it, standing in her open doorway. The house, a mere one-storied thatched cottage (known to this day as "The Fiddler's Rest"), was placed on the verge of the sand-hills, presenting to passers-by on the neighbouring road only one tiny square window.

The woman, a poor and dispirited creature, far gone in a decline, was half-frightened out of her wits at the apparition; but rallied sufficiently to entertain her unwelcome guest, and to make him some tea, on his asking for it. He was so gentle in his behaviour, indeed, and when she took courage to observe him more closely, so obviously at the last nerve of panic and cold, that her fear was changed to pity ere he departed hastily, leaving a silver coin on the table.

He was not seen again until some two or three hours later. On the landward end of a little peninsula, there stood in those days a small ramshackle ale-house of ill-repute, frequented only by smugglers and such unconventional folk. It was a low broad blue building with a thatched roof, surrounded by a tumble-down community of wooden sheds and out-

buildings, and commonly called "The Blue House."

To one of these sheds, that served the rough pony of the establishment as a stable, the Fiddler found his way in the dark. There he spent one hour of that long evening; climbing into the hay-loft when Tom Dunn, the landlord, arriving home presently, entered to stable his pony. There he might possibly have spent the night, but that Tom, who was as usual at this hour of the day rather drunk, contrived on returning with a lantern a little later, to set fire to some loose straw. Luckily the flame was tramped out ere the wooden shed itself took fire; but the hapless Fiddler, threatened with being roasted alive and half-suffocated by the smoke, after perishing from cold all day, made what shift he could to escape. He left Tom Dunn with the fervent conviction to his dying day that he had seen the Devil in person fleeing from the stable to the foreshore: a dark hint (by which he but poorly profited) to mend his evil courses!

But far from imputing it to the same personage, when two Scotch sailors who had brought ashore some kegs of "Dieppe" to the Blue

House, returned, after an agreeable interval of whiskey, to their boat, and failed to find it, they turned upon Tom himself with a profanity that was more universal than Scotch in its terms. But here it becomes necessary to leave the Fiddler, who was certainly no waterman, to the darkness and the river.



## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SECOND.

### THREE-QUARTER WILLIM'S COMMISSION.

“How tutti-taiti,  
Wha 's fou now?”

BURNS.

MEANWHILE, the Fiddler's friends at Carne had heard, during the previous evening, from the lips of the gig-driver Ellit, that the fugitive had failed his assignation outside Hartup. The only conclusion to be drawn was that he had been trapped. But still later the same evening, those two heroes, Johnny Sands and Matther Dawson, after zealously following up every imaginable clue, whether at the “George,” Marley Cross, or at Stirreport and the region round, without success, came back.

While the Fiddler had been engaged in playing “The Three Tykes” to Lord Carne, almost within a stone's-throw of the death chamber in the great house round which the gossip of the whole country circled by night, the chorus

at the "First and Last" was coming to deep decisions about the recent events.

It was generally understood that if the Fiddler was duly caught he would be convoyed by his captors across the ferry below the Inn, and so with him to Carne gaol. A small crowd haunted both sides of the ferry through the evening, in consequence; and a juvenile tout had been retained by Three-Quarter Willim to bring the news up to the company in the back room at the Inn.

About eight o'clock a low roar, like the shout of a mixed crowd of boys and hobbledehoys, reached the ears of those who sat with Three-Quarter Willim. He himself, on its being remarked upon by his next neighbour, rose up and shook his lean and wrinkled fist triumphantly.

"They have him, black dummy 'at he is! they have him! ay, the deil hasn't it aal his own way! I asked Sally to pray he s'ould; an' they have him, ay, ay! An' now, Fox, whaät d'ye say to your fine Fiddlor? Bettor ye had ta'en ma advice, and kept your hands clean of the wicket villin from the forst!"

"Gox, I believe Willim's right,—sounds like

it!" said Mistor Fostor. "I'd gie a yellow boy to be the hangman! Oh-a Cap'n, 'tis a mercy ye haena gotten him for a son-in-law!"

"I stick to my guns!" cried Ffoulkes, in some temper. "Goodsakes, men, a fellow like that doesn't go murderin' for nothin'! What's more, ye won't get any jury to give him gallows grace! *He* may be a dummy, but ye winnot get the black tyke to speak again him!"

"I'm sorry for ye, Ffoulkes!" said Mistor Fostor. "'Tis nat'ral ye s'ould wish to stand by your ship, when there's no way out o't. But, man, considor it! They canna get ower it, that's sart'n; an' if I had my way, why, I wad hang the dummy as a warnin',—ay, whativor, I wad that!"

"But, man alive!" responded the Innkeeper, laughing excitedly, "you can't hang man or monkey till the black spot's found on him!"

"Becrikey, I wad tho'! There s'ould be a somebody hanged for ivory morder was ivor commit'd, to fright'n sic as this dummy frae comin' about honest men like hus."

The Innkeeper might have found much to say to this, it is certain; but now Three-Quarter Willim's tout, a lumpish, wide-mouthed

lad, beaming in the pride of his commission, entered. He was greeted by a general murmur:

“Well, Fhred?”

“They hanna catched him, mistor!” said Fred, moving his whole face, and twisting his mouth into a kind of trumpet, in his eagerness to give emphasis to what he had to say.

The whole company, that had opened its mouth like one man on the boy's entrance, now shut up that organ tight in disappointment.

“Then I canna gie ye more than a happenny!” said Three-Quarter Willim, judicially shaking his head. “Ye are nae use, 'at I can mak' oot, Fhred; haway wi' yer, oot o' ma sight!—But stop a bit!” he added, on second thoughts; “what was that they were shootin' at?”

In spite of his meanly-doled-out payment, Fred laughed,—the laugh of a delicious recollection.

“We was droonin' the Fiddler's tyke doon by the landin' yonder. I sees him in the chare, and cops hold on him, an' he grabs me by the thumb.” He held up a bloody thumb to testify to the truth of the story.

A murmur of sensation ran round the room at this ocular proof of the beast's malignity.

"Droondead?" said Mistor Fostor.

"Ay, nae mistake!" said Fred. "He tried to creep oot o' the watter the forst time, the beast was that sly, he was! But Cribby hits him a crack on the heed wi' a brick, and Sam Wood catches him one wi' a stick an' breaks his leg!" Here he broke into irrepressible giggles, wriggling about in his desire to express himself vividly enough.

Three-Quarter Willim was so much affected by the tale that he resumed his previous antics of delight, and then fell into such an inordinate fit of chuckling, that the tears came to his eyes. More—he put his hand into his pocket, and drew out a second coin—a penny this time!

"What then, ye young impet? what then? See," and he held up the penny; "this is for being a good boy, hey, hey, he!"

"Then," the boy resumed with the increased unction of popular approbation in his voice, "then Sam howks him back into the watter, an' we aäl had cock-shies, and Cribby had a half-brick, Mistor, an' that—that finishes him!" The boy again held up his bloody thumb; and nodded at it in conclusion, as if to say,—He's paid out for that now!

Three-Quarter Willim was handing him the penny, when the footstep of some new-comer caused a flutter in the company. It was Marged Ffoulkes. She paused in the doorway, while Mistor Fostor, who had not seen her so far, began to moralise on the tale they had newly heard.

“I’m varry pleased the beggorin’ beast is deid; but he’ll find his way back in some divilish shape yet! Lads, I wish the dorty Fiddlor was where his tyke is, and me hoyin’ bricks at his black heid the same as when I was a canny little lad at school!”

The thought of his innocent school-days brought quite a tender inflection into Mistor Fostor’s tones. But their sentiment was rudely interfered with by a voice from the door—a voice tremulous and tearful and angry!

“Oh, cowards—cowards, you are!” it was Marged who confronted them, stepping right into the room.

The boy Fred, in some fatuity, faced toward her with the remnant of a grin still lingering on his lips, and with the last clk! of a chuckle in his throat.

She turned on him, crying: “You young

rat!" seized the amazed hero by the shoulders, and shook him, with such fury that his teeth rattled again.

Once more she looked round the room with a fierce nod of her black mane, and then marched out.

Three-Quarter Willim was the first to recover.

"He, he, he, he!" he laughed perplexedly, "the Fiddlor must ha' witched your daughter, Fox!"

"Witched?" echoed Mistor Fostor, "she's gone clean daft! But wait, me lads, till us has landed oor divil-fish himsel'! That'll be the best on't! Hinnies, I'll sup well that night!"

"Ha," said Ffoulkes, "your fish isn't caught yet, Fostor! Ye'll have to sup to-night on sheep's-head!"

## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-THIRD.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

“She only knew the birth and death  
Of days, when each that died  
Was still at morn a hope, at night  
A hope unsatisfied.”

*Silhouettes.*

WITH the deepening of the December gloom, a shadow had fallen upon the “First and Last” that would not disperse. It affected all the inmates in their different ways. It made Marged despondent, and at all times moody. It made Mrs Ffoulkes more and more fierce under her aggravated rheumatics, so that at any moment she was ready to lash out with that whipping tongue of hers. The story of her incorrigible daughter’s appearance in the back-room, as she succeeded in gathering it from Betsy’s artless lips, was a final offence, that brought on something like a fury.

This fury grew by its being thwarted in its early stages, and defeated of its natural issue.



She had confidently looked forward to visiting it upon the head of her husband when he came to bed the same night ; but he had lingered downstairs an hour beyond his usual time, drinking "Dieppe," as he had grown too fond of doing latterly. When he did at length arrive upstairs, he was in a state of amiable acquiescence, which rendered all her spleen of no effect. He agreed to everything she proposed, with an inimitable roll of the head. When she launched out about the iniquity of Marged, he replied, chuckling :

"A bad girl, a bad girl!"

In the end, she was obliged to give it up, and postpone the discussion till next morning. She awoke then, just in time to catch her wily husband slinking out of bed, and noiselessly pulling on his breeks.

She at once began : "Hark ye, Fox!" on a sustained note that showed she was prepared to go on for some time to the same tune ; half-raising herself so that her voice should carry.

She heard only one long-drawn sigh in response, and ere she had flung a sentence fairly at him, saw him disappear through the door, his

black neckerchief in one hand, and his waistcoat in the other.

A formidable old woman! Twice this crafty Welshman that she had been fool enough to wed had evaded her; but she would not be baulked. Racked with pains from head to foot as she was, for the snow in the air always meant an increase of rheumatics, she decided to get up at all costs, and rang her bell violently. Fortunately, for the moment at least, it was Betsy who answered it.

As for her goodman, on getting downstairs, he had found Marged drinking tea, and shivering by the kitchen fire. A long night of troubled half-slumbers, of thoughts of the immediate past and the immediate future, concluded at every fresh adjustment of them in her mind, by tears, had left her unnerved and desponding.

"The missis is in an extra bad one this morning," he said to her, touched to see her drooping mouth and spoilt eyes.

As if to emphasise the remark, a violent ring of the bell was rattled on their ears at this juncture.

"You go, Betsy!" he said, and then went

on to develop a plan for outwitting the old woman!

His plan was that Marged should go away for a few weeks until the storm of scandal, set going by the Fiddler, had blown by, and until Mistress Ffoulkes had recovered from her tantrums. He had a married sister living at Greypport as the wife of a silk mercer there, to whom he occasionally sent a jar of smuggled brandy or a roll of tobacco. They had no children of their own, and had asked Marged to visit them more than once. Betwixt Carne and that port there was a continual service of coasters, and with a fair wind the voyage had been known to be performed in seven and a-half hours. One of these vessels, the *Jolly Jane*, was in the river at this very moment, and its captain was an old crony of Ffoulkes's, Sammie Evans, whose only possible defect as a seaman was that he was growing older than some shipowners liked.

The main objection to it all was that Marged did not get on very well with her aunt, who, on a visit to Carne a year ago, had overdosed her with needlework and fine cookery! However, she made no active objection, and it was

agreed between them that he should ascertain during the day from some passing customer when the *Jolly Jane* was likely to leave the port.

Whatever disinclinations Marged had, might well have been set at rest on the arrival of Mistress Ffoulkes downstairs an hour or two later. Marged had taken up her post for the time being in the corner of the kitchen-settle where her step-mother commonly sat; but now, when she heard the slow tread of that heavy foot on the stairs, she rose, got a chair, and placed it for herself well before the fire at its other side. Here she relapsed into her mood, which not even the fear of Mistress Ffoulkes could affect, and sat, her elbows on her knees, her head in her hands. She did not even so much as raise her head when the old woman entered the kitchen. Whatever lack of courtesy there was in this was heavily visited upon her. She heard a step, felt a vicious dig in her backbone, and started up from her self-absorbed attitude only to receive a shocking, resounding smack on the left ear, that fairly threw her off her seat sideways on to the floor.

She rose, half-stunned, stared at her tyrant

a second with an amazed fury struggling with her impulse to sob hysterically, as her hand travelled to her poor bruised cheek, and so was gone.

"Shame!" cried Betsy, and thus giving away her future chances at the hands of their common tyrant, attained Karma.

She followed Marged upstairs, and threw her arms round her pretty neck, and the two mingled their sobs.

"I am going, Betsy, I am going!" Marged kept saying between her gupped tears, "and I'll never never come back, never!"

"Then, I'm for gannin' too!" said Betsy. "I cannot face yon auld torkey without ye. But dinnot take on so, honey, dinnot now!"

There and then the two fond sobbing creatures set to work to put their traps together. Neither of them ever set foot again in the kitchen, where the old Roman sat waiting Betsy to make up the fire and peel the potatoes.

"I'll can gan back to ma mithor at Hartwick," said Betsy presently; "but what's to come of ye?"

"I'm going to my auntie at Greypport for

a few days," said Marged, with a fresh access of emotion, "and I'll go to London after, and make lots of money, as a singer at the play!"

"What about your old sweetheart, Andrer?" asked Betsy, who was so far in her young mistress's secrets.

"O Betsy," she cried, "I'll go and see him now, as soon as ever we've packed."

She kept out of her wardrobe, and put on, her black frock, her crimson cloak, and a beaver hat, as an attire suitable to various adventures, that would serve equally if she sailed on the *Jolly Jane*, or if she had to choose some other way of escape from her step-mother. Betsy went and reconnoitred in due course, to see if the way out was clear. This ascertained, Marged stole down, to find her father waiting to intercept her in the passage.

"Sammie Evans can give you a berth in the *Jolly Jane*, and the less ye see of the damned old witch till ye go, the better!" he said. "But I see ye ha' your tippet on! Where is it now wi' ye?"

She told him she was going to say good-

bye to Andrer, and he agreed, with a head-shake to show he had his reservations.

“He’s been rather rummy in his ways since yon night,” he said. “Ye can leave a loop-hole, in case ye should chance on someone ye fancy at Greyport, hey?”

She shook her head, in her turn, and sped off to the ferry. On reaching Carne Quay, and Fostor’s, she went straight to the boat shed, and seeing no sign of Andrer below, climbed the outer staircase to the loft, and knocked at the door.

After an interval, a step sounded within. Andrer himself opened the door; and held it, half-open! His tartan neckerchief was displaced, his hair was tumbled and dishevelled, as if he had slept in his clothes.

“Margret,” he said, “I’m sorry; but I canna let anybody in here to-day!” As he spoke, she saw that his face had again the intensely concentrated expression, anxious, pre-occupied, absent, which had made her uneasy before.

“I’ve come to say good-bye!”

“Good-bye?” he laughed as if in some remote way the idea amused him; “that

cannot be! my coble's not done yet! But what's made your cheek sae red?"

"It's my step-mother; she has turned the very house against me! I'm going to Greyport by the *Jolly Jane*, to-day!"

"To-day! nonsense! Three days more, and my boat will be done! That's why I can't let you in; if anyone sees these windbags and thingmajigs of—H'sh! what's that? That's the wind escaping. Marged, ye must wait! If anyone sees my coble and these things belonging her, before she's done, 'twill all come to nothing. In three days she'll be done! Deary, deary, think on it! Three days! I give you till then. And then, then you must come, and christen her with red wine—*MARGED!* that's the name she will have!"

"Mayn't I just see her, one look, before I go!"

"Go? ye can't go, I tell ye, till then."

"Oh, I must!"

"No, no! Come out o' that! as the cat said to the cod-fish. Wait till Friday, and then I'll marry you, Margret, and you will make me a well man again! Dear, dear little Meg; you don't know what's coming.



H'sh! what's that? that's another of them. I'm to be Lord Carne, and you my Lady; for her Ladyship's dead, poor thing! Now you see, you musn't go!"

The tears came to her eyes again, as they had so often done in these days, and the sight of them brought him back to himself. He drew her gently into the loft, whispering her not to look round, on any account! Then he kissed her tenderly, first on the forehead, then on the lips.

"You must mind all I say!" he whispered. "Once the coble's done, I shall be as well as ever again,—especially if ye'll be my dearest Meg, and take me to Heaven the same as if no one had ever had cause to rue my name and cast up death against me. And if ye're to go to Greypport, why, then, I'll come after ye, deary, as soon as the thing's done. And I'll keep back the christening."

She laughed through her tears, and he took her handkerchief from her and with the kindest touch in the world dried a lingering tear from her pale cheek. In return, she re-tied his neckerchief, taxing him with neglecting himself.

“And I mayn’t see the boat?” she asked yet again.

He smiled, and shook his head.

“It’s not long to wait now, in any case. And if ye’re unhappy at the ‘First and Last,’ it’s time you had another home, Margret. Ah, never forget how I love you. It’s good-bye only for a day or two, mind ye that! I’ll be after you,—how can I help it?”

She had meant to thank him for his service to the Fiddler, and to beg him to do anything in his power to aid the fugitive further, if chance should arise; but she felt it impossible now. She left him at the ferry, feeling a lurking uneasiness on that account.

As he handed her into the ferry-boat, for she had chosen not to row herself over, he looked again so strong, so alert, that she tried to persuade herself her fears for him were idle. But a certain look in his eyes, desirous, vivid, pleading, brought the blood to her cheeks, as she remembered all he had said at this meeting and the previous one. That look mingled sadly enough with her thoughts of Mistress Ffoulkes, her father, Betsy, the Tegners, and, above all, the Fiddler.

In returning across the ferry, she felt her poor heart-strings pulled with the most painful and, as she said to herself, absurd throbs, as she looked up at the familiar ten back windows and crazy balcony of the "First and Last." Every window in it had such writings on its panes as hold the secrets of the heart and its attachment to a hundred common things. Every patch in its weathered red brick held in it some reminder of feelings too subtle for words, too strong to be ever got rid of to the end of time.

## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FOURTH.

### FAREWELL, CARNE!

“Farewell, farewell, to my sweet mate! a long farewell to Carne!  
I’ll walk nae mair the Seagate, wi’ my bairn upon my arm!”

*Old Song.*

WHEN Marged returned to the Inn, peeping in first through the side door as a precaution, she received a sharp pang to see her box in the passage, corded and ready to be transhipped. There was a horrible finality about it, she felt, flinching as it caught her eye. On entering, she found her father behind his usual glass cage in the bar. He was humming carelessly to himself, as if nothing was the matter.

She tapped on the glass, and he came to her, and told her the dragon was safe downstairs.

“I want to go upstairs to look for something,” she said; and fled up the familiar, yielding, creaking steps. She really wanted to pay another visit to the long room, the piano, the balcony, and the other things of her common

day, which she had turned into human creatures by her childish fancy in former time, and which still kept for her a living place in her heart.

The fear of being interrupted in these last rites and observances only served to add a last, livelier touch to her emotion. She snatched up from the piano a tattered music book which lay there. It was the book that contained "Poor Mary Ann," and other superseded tunes whose recollected airs would be like familiar speech to her in a strange place. She went to the windows: the swirl of the brown water without, as she had seen it a thousand times, in all moods, grey, brown, or radiant, gave her positive pain. And for the piano, she would have given much to have spent a last hour in playing every tune she knew, or half knew, upon its keys; but she dared not. She turned away, then went back to it in spite of herself, and failing to resist the impulse of old habit, opened it and sat down.

A dozen bars of Elsie Marley—

"Elsie Marley's gown sae fine,  
She lies in bed till half-past nine!"

as a sort of last defiance to the dragon below, and

she was seized with a panic, fancying she heard steps approaching. She fled incontinently, casting one long fond look back at the little stage on which she had built up so many hopes, so many maiden fancies, and so many invisible castles of comfort.

She went next to pay a good-bye visit to the Tegners, her father telling her the *Jolly Jane* was to sail at five, and he would put her on board at four.

As she went down the Seagate, — passing Pit Alley, behold Fred, her victim of last night! who took his revenge by singing out:

“O Meg Fox, O Meggie Fox! Who ran away wi’ the Fiddlor, oh?”

Another time, and she would have been quite equal to giving chase, and inflicting summary chastisement, but now she had not the heart for it, and she hurried on with her cheeks aflame. It was time surely, though, that she was gone, if such insult could be! Yet a space farther and she saw Three-Quarter Willim at the other side of the street; and on the old dog’s catching sight of her, he raised his cane and shook it, in a way that might either be meant to be playful or threatening. She took it to be the last.

When she reached the music shop, she was surprised to see an unsightly piece of board nailed across one of the great windows. The window had evidently been broken, and within she found M. Tegner in a state of gesticulatory anger and distress.

“*Mais, mon amie!*” he cried; “see! The little diable have broke the vindow; and Madame!—she is sick in her bed, ver’ sick!”

He wiped his eyes, in his emotion, with the dirty duster that he used to dust the pianos.

Marged told him she was going away, that very evening. Then, he exclaimed, they would go too! And she must find her way to London, where she would make her fortune, and find both them and, perhaps, the Fiddler!

He dared not take her to see Madame, because the good lady was suffering from hysteria, and if she knew Marged was going away to-day, the effect might be disastrous.

“But be sure you come see your poor vriends in London!” he said in parting, coming out upon the strip of pavement to say farewell—“Kyo Street-a! look for the name of the sister of Madame—Mme. Lubin, Modes de

Paris! *Au revoir, — au revoir, mon amie, Margarita!*”

He turned away into the music shop, the duster to his eyes.

. . . . .

It was four o'clock; the Seagate was lighting its lamps, and the market square was filled with the winter dusk, beneath which the trodden snow on the ground looked unreal; when a boat left the “First and Last,” carrying the Innkeeper, Marged, and her trunk. It was bitterly cold, a northerly wind was blowing across the river, and there was a thin shuffling edge of ice on the waterside.

“Ye might ha’ had a better night!” said Captain Ffoulkes, as the boat pushed off, and they met the full shrewdness and force of the wind. “It’ll be a bit coarsish outside, and the wind is shifting a bit; but the *Jolly Jane* is a snug little craft; an’ this time to-morrer, all well, ye’ll be safe wi’ your Aunt Sarah. Meg, what are ye piping your eye at now? Is it me, or Andrer, or the Fiddler—confound his fiddle that’s set us all at this loose ends!”

So aboard the *Jolly Jane*, a well set-up coasting schooner, with a suspicion of ice on her



decks, where she had been newly swabbed, to have things pleasant for a lady passenger. Below, a truly sailor-like tea was spread in the captain's cabin; queer confections, side by side with hot dishes, cold dishes; pippins, cheese; tall bottles and small bottles; while a steaming kettle sang on a blazing stove, that made the place as hot as an oven.

She was sitting alone by this stifling stove, her father gone, the ship well afloat in mid current, ere she quite realised it. She sat there, interspersing profound reflections with trivial present discomforts, as one does at such times; when some shouting on deck led her to go up to see what the cause could be; glad of an excuse for fresh air!

It was a mismanaged boat which the schooner had all but run down—a mere tub, rowed with so random a stroke by so poor an oarsman, that the mate of the *Jolly Jane*, on a glimpse over the ship's side, was convulsed with laughter at the spectacle. The captain maintained his post, like a serious seaman, paying no attention to the boat, now that any danger there had been of running it down was past.

It was drifting into the darkness on their

larboard, when Marged sighted it, in such difficulties in the yeasty swell that was on the water, that though so used to boats, and given to feel contempt for those who were not, she was filled with pity for the man. Even as she stood looking on, he lost, in some clumsiness or other, one of his sculls; at the same second a gleam from a distant light ashore let her distinguish his form.

"No, no!" she cries at this, to the astonishment of a seaman who was coiling a rope near her. He was still more astonished to see her put her hands to her face, as if she was afraid to see more, and then turn to him as if she would take him by the arm.

"He is lost!" she said; "oh, save him!" It was the Fiddler, in fact; in the boat he had appropriated at the "Blue House."

"He's all right, Miss," said the man grinning. With that she ran to the captain.

"It is the Fiddler!" she cried. "Oh, save him!"

Luckily, the captain had just heard his story, and something of Marged's part in it, from Captain Ffoulkes himself. So, in spite of his ship-master's traditional grumble at

losing a ship's length or two on leaving port on such a night, he laid the ship to. With much scuffling, and some swearing over the Fiddler's fecklessness, they contrived to sling him aboard, and his fiddle with him.

But when they had him there, he was so numbed with cold, besides being well drenched by his own crab-catching, that he could barely stagger to the companion. He did not see Marged as they led him below and gave him dry clothes and some hot tea; and so into a bunk with him, where he lay like one exhausted.

It was so Marged saw him on returning to the captain's cabin, and glancing in at him as she passed by. A bare quarter of an hour more and they were on the bar. The ship staggered uncomfortably, so that Marged had to keep reminding her pulses she ought not to give way too quickly to the sea-qualms which threatened her. But the cabin began to oppress her again, it was so close, so insidiously malodorous; and she told herself she would be better on deck. She tried to make her way up, and a sudden lurch had almost over-balanced her, when someone appeared at the top of the

stair and cried, shutting up the hatch as a swish of spray reached her face :

“Better below, Miss. ’Tis a nasty night comin’ on.”

Evidently it was bad weather outside. She had much to do to get back to her seat, and when she had reached it there came a lurch that threw her against the fixed ledge of the table, and sent a plate with a crash to the floor. She set herself to gather its pieces up, and then, looking round, was startled to hear a step at the door, and to see the Fiddler steadying himself by either side of the doorway. He put his hand to his breast at seeing her ; and his pale, haggard face recalled to her painfully all that he had gone through since she parted with him outside the lively hostelry in the High Street at Humbro’, after his triumph there on that famous night.

Apparently the sea itself did not affect him ; but his late misadventures had set their seal on him, and if he had really stood at the foot of the gallows, he could not have looked more deathly.

“I am cold,” he said.

She motioned to the fixed seat at the stove

side, and held out her hand, without daring to rise, to guide him safely across the cabin. But when he had seized her hand, he threw himself on his knees and, burying his head in her lap, fairly burst into womanish sobs. She could have cried herself for pity to see him.

## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIFTH.

THE END.

“ Oh, come wi' me, my marrow,  
Sae sweet shall be your sleep,  
No in a cauld bed narrow,  
But in the swaying deep ! ”

WILLIAM SHARP.

THE North Sea, without a doubt, was wild to-night, and prepared for mischief, as the captain of the *Jolly Jane* saw as soon as he had taken his first tack to the south outside the bar. The schooner did not at all like the steep seas that waited her outside, and would willingly have turned about if it had been an admitted thing to shirk weather when she met it. But Sammie Evans was a stern old fatalist, who never went back, and who let Fate bear the responsibility for any rasher seamanship.

All might have gone well as it was if the wind had not shifted a few points ere they had got half-a-mile out, coming away in black gusts of a vicious whipping fury, that made the seas roar like a herd of mad bullocks, and tumble and

chase each other in a way to shock even the stoutest and nimblest timber that ever floated.

The effect of this upon the two passengers below was to break up rudely their chances of sleep, after the first part of the night had passed. Marged awoke at midnight from a troubled dream which mixed itself confusingly with her surroundings and noise of the sea fury which was gathering head all around.

She thought she heard the Fiddler playing one of his most extravagant fantasias, and playing so fast that her head turned giddy in trying to follow the music. Suddenly he stopped, and gave three sharp knocks with his heel on the floor, whereupon the floor began to swerve and to split asunder beneath their feet, and he disappeared from view. At the same moment three more such knocks came—was she dreaming after all? She rubbed her eyes and sat up in her bunk. More knocks! followed by a terrible rending and tearing, as if some beast of timber were being rent to pieces by some tiger of giant jaws!

The knocks became thuds, the thuds became thunder-strokes; and then came a rush and

scatter, like a thousand rats tumbling down the stairway. It was sea-water; now she heard it washing on the cabin floor, and hissing in the stove of the adjoining cabin, and then rush to and fro, as the ship rolled, like some wild animal trying to make its way out. She called out and reached for her cloak:—she had half undressed on lying down. No one answered. Where was the Fiddler? Could he possibly be asleep, through this monstrous tempest; or had she only dreamt he had come aboard the vessel? She called again: still no answer! Ah, now there was a light. Some one was coming down the companion way with a lantern! It was—it was the Fiddler! He had not deserted her! But he passed by, as she saw by the little crack of light under her door. What did it mean? She managed to find her shoes, wet as they were, and to pull them on, and throw on her crimson cloak, stumbling in the darkness, just as the light returned, going by.

She opened the door, and called to him as he reached the companion way. He turned, and then she divined his errand; for his eternal green bag was in his hand.

“Come!” he said, quite calmly; “they know



not what will be next! The boats perhaps! It is Fate pursues me. Come!"

Even as she was trying to think of all that this meant (and his speech was made more confusing than ever by the unceasing uproar), there came a crash that transcended chaos.

"Come!" he cried, holding the lantern high; not a moment too soon, for a pour of water followed that washed up to his knees. He began to ascend the steps without waiting longer, drawing his fiddle up close under his arm with tender concern.

He cared more for his fiddle than for her, that was clear. This indifference of his, coupled with the calm face that he preserved through it all, armed her too with a sort of cold recklessness of the worst that could come. She managed, ere his lantern had disappeared up the ladder, to reach its foot, and to drag herself up with the aid of the hand-rail.

Ere she had touched the topmost step, a sudden glare on deck made the wet panels of the companion gleam red. It came, she saw, as she reached the deck and looked round, from a flare at the stern, a tar barrel newly set alight.

Its red flames made the wet deck seem as if it ran blood, and showed the giddy running seas—how near! A moment only, for then there came yet one more of those sheer avalanches of water, that fell as though it would crash through everything. She cried out, and stooped, giving herself up for lost, and the descending wave threw her prone, and drenched her cloak and her poor garments beneath, as if they had been paper.

Stunned, wet to the skin, thinking every second to be slid down the treacherous deck into the sea itself, which seemed to be now high in the air, now far below the ship, without any law even of chaos, her first impulse was still to look round for the Fiddler. He was standing, holding on to some rope, right under the foremast; and at the minute of her discovery, she felt a strong hand seize her firmly. It was the ship's mate, who took her with a run down the slippery deck to the Fiddler's side.

"I'll have to lash ye both tae this!" said the mate.

The Fiddler shook his head, and steadying his feet, made as though he would move away, looking around for some escape. Marged

could not forbear in her growing terror of body and soul, from putting out one beseeching hand to him, while the other gathered together the flying flaps of her crimson cloak. He held up a repellant hand in his turn.

“No, no!” he cried, “the hour is against me. Keep away from me, or you die!”

She swooned at the repulse, her poor senses failing her. If, by this, she had not been fastened to the mast, she must have fallen. When she came to, it was from cold! The water was washing over her feet, the wind was blowing loose her wet cloak, and her hair. But what,—what was that dark vessel towering above the schooner. One moment it was here, the next it was gone; but she had an indistinct sense that it would return, if only she could keep her stunned and bewildered eyes awake to see!

She had not seen that, during these moments, a white coble had been approaching from the side of the harbour, to which they were being slowly driven back, rudderless, helpless as they were. The coble rode the seas with the lightness of a cork, pulled by a dozen stout arms. The few men left on the schooner gave a

faint cheer at sight of her. She was lying by, waiting her chance to get alongside, when a terrific gulf of water carried the two craft apart. Then came another of those iron crashes of overtopping seas upon the deck. Marged cowered as low as her lashings would let her, crying for mercy. When she dared look up, it was to find someone undoing the fastenings.

"She is going!" a voice said, "take this!" It was a lifebelt.

She looked round, with a crying desire for some friendly face! The man was gone. How cold, how cold, she was! Her hair was in her eyes. Ah, now she saw!

On one side there was the white coble, with only one of her crew left her, and he was making desperate efforts to reach the wreck. On the other towered high, then again sank low, the dark vessel she had seen before. A second glance at the coble, and she cried out:

"Andrer!"

Was it fancy that she saw the Fiddler being hauled into the dark vessel, hanging in mid air, and pointing one of his rescuers back to her? Another second and a bearded seaman, roped and belted, was running, almost

on all fours, like a beast, across the treacherous deck to her side.

But she turned from him to the coble which had been driven in beneath the schooner, a last sea sending it on with a rush—crash against the bows! A deadly blow!

“Andrer!” she cried again.

He stood up in the boat, held out his arms, and cried, “Margret!”

“Come! come!” said the bearded sailor, on her other side, touching her.

She threw off his arm, threw back her hair, gathered her cloak, fled down the rent and desperate deck, that seemed to cry out and part asunder beneath her feet; and with one wild leap was in the clasp of him who had staked his boat of boats to save her. And oh, the comfort of those unavailing arms.

“You won’t leave me?” she cried, “O Andrer, Andrer!”

“Margret!” he said, in her hair, for she clung close to his breast; “Margret, my boat can’t live after that deadly crack! Do you love me? Christ save us!”

“You have saved me!” she said.

She felt the boat sinking, and looking round

saw no sign of other life than theirs. She clung to him in a last sobbing rapture. Her home was in that sinking boat; and he was her whole world, and her immortality.

“’Tis all over, Margret!”

“Andrer, we’re in Heaven!”

The North Sea held the night. The two lovers sank, through what purgatory, what sea-strangling and torture of water that was like fire! into that profound sleep whose waking, says the poet, is paradise!



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